

# Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

Vol. 28, No. 7

Elul 5780/Tishri 5781

September 7 to October 11, 2020

jewishberkshires.org

## Not Your Bubbe's Challah

"ChallahDay" Baking with Mandylicious!

On Monday, September 14 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes the Challah Guru, Mandy Silverman of Mandylicious Challah, as she shares some favorite recipes and tips for making challah for the holidays that will truly take your dinner table to the next level.

Mandy Silverman founded Mandylicious in 2013 in Sharon, MA. Since then, she has created over 300 unique challah and babka recipes and has developed a worldwide following, including over 25,000 Instagram followers. In addition to selling challah and teaching classes, she loves sharing her recipes and tips, and supporting others who want to make their own challah.

First, using a honey-spiced dough recipe, Mandy will demonstrate how to stuff your challah braids with two holiday-themed fillings. She will then share her surprisingly easy method of braiding and making a round challah. Don't miss this unique opportunity and don't forget to bring all of your challah questions. Recipes will be provided.



A rainbow cookie challah, from the Mandylicious "Please Distract Me From the Pandemic" series

At press time, all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs were scheduled to be presented via Zoom or other platforms – please check your emails from Federation to find the necessary links, or visit our calendar of events online at [www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org).

### Inside

- Support Your *Berkshire Jewish Voice*..... 3
- To Jewish Parents on 'Opting Out'..... 4
- High Holy Days in the Berkshires .....8-9
- LIFE & LEGACY's Arlene D. Schiff ..... 10
- Lost? & Found: The Jews of Nigeria..... 18
- Daniel Klein is No SchmeGoogle .....22-23

### The Mandylicious Story By Josefin Dolesten / JTA

Mandy Silverman remembers being scared of the kitchen as a child.

"There was a constant joke in my house growing up that I would mess up instant iced tea," she recalled in a

MANDYLICIOUS, continued on page 5

## High Holy Days 5781

High hopes for a happy, healthy, and peaceful year



PHOTO BY FRANK MOFFATT - AT KIBBUTZ LOTAN NATURE AND MIGRATORY BIRD RESERVE

As the saying goes, "birds of a feather flock together," but this year, our flock in the Berkshires and beyond will be celebrating the High Holy Days in our own spaces, coming together online or socially distanced. But instead of feeling sore, let yourself soar – flying solo can also be a beautiful thing if you're moving in a good direction, like this bird in flight above Kibbutz Lotan in the Arava Valley of Southern Israel, a migration hub. As Emily Dickinson wrote: "Hope is the thing with feathers."

## "The Future of Microfinance"

Economists Paul DiLeo and Ira Lieberman to present on development finance and empowering entrepreneurs and small businesses worldwide



Paul DiLeo



Ira Lieberman

On Thursday, September 24 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires welcomes economists Paul DiLeo and Ira Lieberman, who will talk about the subject of the new book they co-edited (along with Todd A. Watkins and Anna Kanze), *The Future of Microfinance*.

The first provider of microfinance services to receive attention was the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, started in 1983 by Muhammad Yunus, who

won the Nobel Peace Prize for his accomplishments in 2006. From the book description: "Over the past four decades, microfinance — the provision of loans, savings, and insurance to small businesses and entrepreneurs shut out of traditional capital markets — has grown from a niche service in Bangladesh and a few other countries to a significant global source of

MICROFINANCE, continued on page 20

## TZEDAKAH SUNDAY THANK YOU!

Thank you to the hundreds of community members who answered the call and made a gift during our Tzedakah Sunday outreach.

Together we raised over



### Thank You to These Superhero Volunteers:

Judy Cook, Sheila Donath, Ann Dorfman, Rose Ellis, Heidi Ferren, Jane Glaser, Margo Golos, Steven Green, Marcie Greenfield Simons, Ellen Heffan, Eli Katzman, Marilyn Katzman, Ros Kopfstein, Jilly Lederman, Amy Lindner-Lesser, Pattie Lipman, Stuart Masters, Natalie Matus, Norman Michaels, Gail Orenstein, Alba Passerini, Sandi Rubin, Steve Rubin, Tom Sawyer, Lisa Schindler-Frankel, Naomi Schwartz, Jane Shiyah, Ed Udel, Rabbi Levi Volovik, Alexandra Warshaw, Rabbi Seth Wax, Rebecca Wolin and Rich Woller.

## Rabbi Reflection

### Following a Path Toward Redemption When the Way is Unfamiliar

By Rabbi Barbara Cohen



I saw a bald eagle this morning and I wonder what it saw.

High atop the dead pinnacle of a living tree, the eagle sat peering down and I wondered what the world looked like from up there. I was floating in a kayak in the very early rising light and mist on Laurel Lake, no other humans in sight, and the eagle's ability to see clearly, through the air, into the murky water, to know what it was searching for and to wait patiently for it, filled me with a longing to be that focused, that 'on mission,' in the world that I inhabit. Most of us had a misconception before the pandemic that we could plan ahead, maintaining the illusion that things would always continue to operate by recognizable principles and that when life didn't

do what we expected, that there would be some well-worn pathways to getting back on track. Now...not so much.

The word 'unprecedented' has been so exhausted to describe things that have been going on for the last few years. Some people, with the trait of braggadocio, assert that things have never been this great, big, fantastic and no one has ever done better, been smarter, known everything...even more than the experts, no matter which field is being discussed. Others, with the breathlessness of anxious incredulity, are saying nothing like this has ever been done before...challenging the long-established social contract and the very foundations of our democratic and constitutional history. It is not just the word 'unprecedented' that is exhausted. Everyone I speak with both casually and in pastoral conversation is so tired that it is hard to find a way to replenish our energy, especially under the circumstances of COVID-19 restrictions. Remember what a good hug from a friend did for our spirits? A handshake when we met a new person? A meal out in a favorite or new restaurant? These antidotes to weariness are no longer available to us. How about breathing your own expired carbon dioxide as a steady diet? What's that doing to our brains and tissues over the long run? COVID brain is affecting everyone and because this situation is 'unprecedented,' no one knows what the long-term effects of this gaseous exchange irregularity will leave in its wake.

Our tradition comes to the rescue. Although most of us will be sharing our High Holy Days online, we are called upon to *FOCUS*. On ourselves, our relationships, and the ways that we interact with our inner higher sense of self and our connection with the Divine, however we each understand that Unknowable. We are asked to reflect and ponder who we have been, who we are and who we would hope to become in the year that is unfolding before us.

*Ultimately, although we pray this year in (virtual) community, it is as if we are praying alone. The demands of the High Holy Days, the ten Days of Awe, are a solitary journey.*

And not just for ourselves alone. Who are we to others? How do we ask for forgiveness for the regrettable things that we have done during the year past? How do we stand up and face, with honesty, humility, and courage, what we have thought and done in this unprecedented year? What is the redemption we seek and what does it feel like? How open are we to literally, spiritually, or figuratively prostrate ourselves before the 'Heavenly Court' to ask that we be pointed toward the path of redemption when the way has become so unfamiliar, so dark and filled with landmarks we have never seen before? Can we open our hearts and souls to the work that this requires of us? Ultimately, although we pray this year in (virtual) community, it is as if we are praying alone. The demands of the High Holy Days, the ten Days of Awe, are a solitary journey. These days are filled with words and yet the silence is profound...perhaps deafening. We can become lost in that void, the sound of the shofar bringing us home to this world and also raising us up to the world above. A ram's horn...imagine that... in 2020, beginning the Jewish New Year 5781, we harken and resonate to the sound of a person blowing the horn of an animal – not the notification sounds on our phones. The sound of human breath making an animal's horn vibrate, the signal of our attention to the Holy. Pay attention, the shofar demands, to the details, the notes, the differences of the calls of *ba'al tekiah*, how your body experiences the sounds of *tekiah*, *teruah*, *shevarim*. Or if you feel nothing, pay attention to that, too. Where are you? Who are you? How are you? What will you grow towards as your life moves forward? What do you see for yourself as your path?

The eagle sees it all. Piercing the density of air and water, it knows what it is made to do. It waits, scans and dives to retrieve from this world that which sustains it and provides for those other beings in its life. How fortunate to be that clear in these unprecedented times. How we might long to feel that inner surety of purpose. Alas, we are human and all we have is our own inner voice and hopefully the voices of those upon whom we rely and trust. And the voice of the Shofar...calling us from on high to dive, to scan and to retrieve from this world what is good and nourishing for us, our loved ones, and all the world. *Shanah tovah* and may 5781 bring light, truth and the courage to dare.

With prayers for health and an end to these times of trouble.

*Rabbi Barbara Cohen is the spiritual leader of Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington*

## Letters to the Editor

### Helping Them Stay Available, Accessible, and Ready

Dear Friends at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

On behalf of everyone at the Elizabeth Freeman Center, I want to thank you for your donation.

We are in very dangerous times right now. The very necessary steps we are taking to stop the spread of the coronavirus also create the very conditions that result in explosions of domestic and sexual violence. We know that the home is not safe for so many in our community and we are starting to see the effect of the shelter-in-place orders as our world slowly begins to reopen and survivors begin to reach out.

We are here. Our offices and shelter are open. Our 24/7 hotline and emergency services continue. We are helping survivors get protection orders and we continue our counseling and advocacy. We are providing in-person and remote services. We are available, accessible, and ready.

Your donation helps make this possible. Truly, THANK YOU!

Sincerely,  
Janis Broderick, Executive Director  
Elizabeth Freeman Center  
Pittsfield

### Putting "Thank You For Your Service" Into Action

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires:

On behalf of Soldier On, and the veterans we serve, thank you for your generous gift to the Soldier On food pantry.

By putting "thank you for your service" into action, you have joined our mission to end homelessness among the brave men and women who pledged their lives for our freedom. Your support and generosity are helping us change the end of the story for at-risk and homeless veterans.

Soldier On relies on compassionate people like you to achieve our mission to end homelessness among our military veterans. Your donation goes a long way to assisting us in developing an building affordable, supportive permanent housing, in addition to impacting our programs that our veterans deserve.

Sincerely,  
Bruce J. Buckley, Chief Executive Officer  
Soldier On  
Pittsfield

### Supporting a Mission of Youth Development and Empowerment

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires,

Thank you so much for the recent donation in support of Railroad Street Youth Project. Since its founding, RSYYP continues to serve a vital role in our community, empowering young people to find their voices and unique identities in the world, follow their passions, and successfully negotiate the often-difficult transition to adulthood. Through RSYYP, our constituents explore and develop ideas and projects which enrich their lives, the lives of their peers, and our community as a whole.

In the past year alone, RSYYP served over 800 youths in South County through programs like our drop-in center, the Youth Operational Board, apprenticeships, mentoring, sexual health education the South County Community Health Coalition.

Your gift is particularly significant during the current pandemic, which has highlighted both the intense need and the incredible resilience of our community's youth. Even when faced with increased feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression, they are eager to connect, learn, and succeed.

Without your support for our mission of youth development and empowerment, none of this would be possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Amanda Timpone, Executive Director  
Railroad Street Youth Project  
Great Barrington

**MORE LETTERS**, on page 4

**Berkshire**  
**JEWISH VOICE**

A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

The color photography in this issue of the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* is made possible through the generosity of **Bob and Elaine Baum, honorary publishers**. The staff of the Federation and the BJV are deeply grateful.

## In My View

### Support the Berkshire Jewish Voice with a volunteer subscription to your Jewish community newspaper

By Albert Stern / BJV Editor



We had just about put the March/April edition of the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* to bed – an issue filled with Passover news and advertising and a front page “save the date” for Federation’s Super Sunday on May 17 – when the pandemic hit. With everything up in the air, we made some space on the front page for an important notice warning that “due to the evolving response to coronavirus, some programs listed in this paper may have been canceled or postponed after our press deadline.”

As it turned out, all the programs listed in that paper were canceled. So was Super Sunday. And so too, sorta/kinda, was Passover, at least the kind of Pesach celebrations most of us are accustomed to.

Confronted with crisis, Federation leadership turned on a dime, and did a bang-up job of raising emergency funds and reassigning resources so that necessary services reached those most in need. We marshaled volunteers from the community to deliver meals, developed programming for adults and our PJ Library families, connected with our local congregations, reached out to the wider community, kept the office running smoothly, made sure our social worker reached the folks who need her services, and tackled the daunting task of sustaining our annual campaign in a time of great uncertainty.

As for the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, it is one of the tools the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has to communicate, in good times and bad, the breadth of its work to our community – which includes full-time residents, seasonal residents, and visitors seeking Jewish connection.

**This publication’s revenues do not cover all its costs, and so your financial help as voluntary subscribers is essential in our efforts to bring you meaningful, positive, and entertaining stories both by and about your neighbors, as well as Jews around the world. Since the start of the pandemic, advertising revenue has dropped and we were unable to publish *Berkshire Jewish Summer*. This year, more than ever, your support is vital to sustain this publication.**

As editor of this newspaper, I had two goals after the coronavirus crisis began: the first was writing about what people in this community are doing in response to the pandemic and the second, publishing stories that reflect how people in the Jewish Berkshires are thinking about this strange time we are all living through.

Even under normal circumstances, we are spread out geographically and can feel separated and siloed. Now, in these months when communal activities have been canceled, those physical and psychological distances can seem extreme. The BJV is one way Federation brings this community together.

In our first issue following the imposition of coronavirus restrictions, the BJV covered Federation’s response to the crisis, as well that of the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County and the Partnership2gether program that connects us with the Afula-Gilboa region of Israel.

Also in that issue, we heard the voice of Williams College student **Gaia Steinfeld DeNisi**, who shared the devastating feeling of having to leave campus in a hurry before the end of her senior year. We covered the way Berkshire County’s leaders **Mark Lefenfeld** and **Jay Weintraub** are working with a coalition of local organizations to battle the food insecurity facing many students who cannot attend school. We shared some of the *nachas* **Carrie and David Schulman** experienced through the Zoom bar mitzvah of their grandson, a virtual *simcha* that then seemed novel but that is now a too-common alternative to in-person celebration.

In the spirit of Passover, readers answered 4 questions we posed about how their lives had changed during the pandemic. **Jodie Friedman** of Hevreh wrote about the letdown that followed her virtual Seder, and how she found solace in Shabbat and the cycle of Jewish holidays. And **Jordana Kozupsky Bel**, palliative care nurse with Berkshire roots now at a busy New York hospital, wrote a raw and honest essay about the emotional and practical obstacles she faced as a frontline worker during the early stages of COVID-19.

Thank you volunteers **Ellen Rosenblatt** and the BJV delivery team, **Mitch Greenwald**, **Roman Rozenblyum**, **Colin Ovitsky**, **Pattie Lipman**, **Amy Cott Filson**, and **Chris Kelly**

### The Jewish Transportation Network Discount Taxi Vouchers

for Jewish residents aged 65 years and older

#### Purchase \$50 worth of taxi vouchers for \$5

(\$6 if requested via mail)

Vouchers are valid for three months and can be used with Tunnel City Taxi of North Adams, Rainbow Taxi of Pittsfield or Berkshire Taxi Co. of Great Barrington and Lee.

Some restrictions apply. Limit 10 voucher booklets per person/per year.

**Purchase vouchers at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires  
196 South St., Pittsfield, MA 01201. (413) 442-4360, ext. 10**

This program is funded by the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Berkshire County and administered by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

*In these months when communal activities have been canceled...physical and psychological distances can seem extreme. The BJV is one way Federation brings this community together.*

In our subsequent issues, rabbis from all our congregations weighed in on the novel clerical challenges posed by the pandemic, and eloquently expressed the pain of being unable to join together in traditional, meaningful Jewish ways in worship and at lifecycle rituals. Together, their essays created a portrait of how, from different points of view, the leaders of our Jewish community are coping spiritually during this crisis.

**Suzanne Sawyer** wrote about finding meaning in staying home, and a story about **Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner**’s acclaimed *Berkshires Farm Table Cookbook* suggested culinary ideas about how to explore the region and feast on its bounty in a summer without the cultural nourishment we are accustomed to.

Pioneering Jewish environmentalist and civil rights activist **Rabbi Everett Gendler** shared his thoughts about life in a time of pandemic and unrest in a substantial and fascinating interview. And as an editor, I was particularly grateful to Shakespeare & Company’s **Jonathan Epstein**, who contributed a truly thought-provoking meditation on “the summer of our discontent,” a season without live performance that may change the way theatre is conceived and presented well into the future. I’ve read similar-themed articles in other publications, and have to say that Jonny’s is the very best.

And no issue of the BJV would be complete without the work of our Traveling With Jewish Taste correspondent, **Carol Goodman Kaufman**, who last autumn also contributed an interview with novelist Alice Hoffman, a presenter at Federation’s Knosh & Knowledge program in Great Barrington. Also last year, I had the pleasure of interviewing another Knosh presenter, economist **Ira Lieberman**, about his book *In Good Times, Prepare for Crisis* – I hope everyone was paying attention to that one. (For more from Ira, please see page 1.) Our pages were also graced with original writing from established authors like novelist **Roberta Silman** and memoirist/historian **Tela Zasloff**, and we’ve also provided a platform for young writers from our community to publish their work as they discover their voices – **Talia Caine** of Monument Mountain High School, for example, contributed a lyrical short story about Hannah Senesh.

Bottom line – we put out a good paper that reflects the spirit of this Jewish community. Over the year ahead, I look forward to covering the ways our Jewish community might change due to COVID-19, as we experience an influx of new members, many of them young families, who are relocating from urban centers. Many readers, particularly snowbird second homeowners, have also expressed how much they appreciated receiving the BJV since the pandemic began, so as to stay better informed about news from the Berkshires.

This year, however, the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* faces a significant shortfall of advertising revenue that threatens to affect how we might be able to publish in the year ahead.

**Please see the insert in this newspaper for the different funding levels available. An honorary publisher gift of \$360 allows us to provide 4 pages of color, while all voluntary subscriptions help us defray the cost of printing and mailing the thousands of copies of the newspaper we send out to you nine times each year.**

As always, thank you for your support.

Paid advertisements do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires or its members.

**Berkshire  
JEWISH VOICE**  
A publication of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, serving the Berkshires and surrounding NY, CT and VT

Published nine times a year by the  
Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

**Dara Kaufman:** Publisher and Managing Editor

**Bob and Elaine Baum:** Honorary Publishers

**Albert Stern:** Editor

**Rose Tannenbaum:** Graphic Design and Layout

**Jenny Greenfeld:** Advertising Sales Representative and Assistant Editor

Editorial opinions expressed in the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* are those of the newspaper and not those of any individual. Signed editorials do not represent the view of the newspaper, but rather express the writer’s view.

The *Berkshire Jewish Voice* is under no obligation to accept any advertisement. It does not guarantee the kashrut of any merchandise or service advertised.

To have the BJV mailed to your home, please send a minimum donation of \$18

Next issue publication date: **October 12, 2020 – November 22, 2020**

Press deadline: **September 1, 2020** • Advertising deadline: **September 23, 2020**

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## Guest Editorial

### An Open Letter to Jewish Parents About 'Opting Out'

By Rabbi Nicole Guzik



In an article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Jewish Journal* in mid-summer, I wrote on a subject that struck a nerve: the Jewish commitment to community within the pandemic, when so many of our interactions have become virtual. With the approaching High Holy Days, this issue is so vital to the survival of Judaism, I am expanding on that thought in this open letter.

When we are forced to be separated, the choice of "opting out" of community becomes tempting. Not seeing one another understandably dissolves some of the attachment that comes with being physically present. But when temptation leads us away from strengthening the Jewish spirit, that is the exact moment we should sprint in the opposite direction.

Many parents wonder how to teach their children the value of community. They ask how children will understand what it means to be something bigger than themselves — part of a greater cause — and feel the essence of being Jewish. There is no greater way of imparting this lesson than with the following:

*Show them. Your actions pave the way for every decision they will make in the future.*

There are terms that are thrown around in an unfortunate way: "opting out" or "taking a break." In choosing whether or not to belong to a synagogue or support nonprofit institutions, many of us are deciding to take a "year off." Jewish professionals across the world are reaching out to colleagues and peers, understanding that if enough people decide to opt out, the Jewish world will never look the same. It will not have a solid foundation to rebuild and reconstruct in the innovative, vibrant, spiritually uplifting ways we so desperately need. Every person who decides to "sit this one out" means chipping away at the Jewish homes thousands rely upon for comfort, solace, celebration, companionship, and connection.

The COVID-19 era has devastated the world. It has taken away lives. It has left others stricken financially, mentally, and emotionally, and has impaired people's health. Many cannot afford to rejoin our communities, and these are the members who must hear our support and feel our love — fellow Jews who need our emotional and financial help. But for those who question the spiritual nourishment of online services, feel disconnected without in-person gathering, and have the means to continue to join sacred communities, my plea is to you. Parents who show their children that the value of the Jewish community relies on whether or not religious school will be in-person or online don't teach their children the value of being a link in the chain of thousands of years of Jewish history. Will you place your child before a screen every single day? Perhaps. But choosing to remain active in your synagogue, day school, religious school, or camp community models for our children that when a family experiences a difficult time, we choose to hold one another's hands instead of fade away into the silence of

*Jewish professionals across the world are reaching out to colleagues and peers, understanding that if enough people decide to opt out, the Jewish world will never look the same*

resignation. A real community is one that upholds those who have fallen. A true community exists even when times are difficult and scary. A sincere community chooses to remain active when the world falls apart.

This is a beautiful opportunity to teach our children why being Jewish is so important. We learn, "All of Israel is responsible for each other." The *midrash* reminds us of the story of a group of people sitting in a boat. One man drills a hole under his seat. Everyone screams. The man simply replies, "Why are you worried? I am only drilling under my own seat." To which the passengers reply, "But you will flood the boat for us all." When we choose to drill a hole only under our seat, thinking that we are merely separating just ourselves, we begin to puncture the ark of Judaism. Even just one hole in the ark has the potential to drown us all.

Phrases like "opting out" or "taking a break" don't exist when you see yourself as a spark of a greater light that penetrates the darkest corners of this world. Staying a member of a community is a covenant — a promise that God can count on you to step up when your unique voice is needed. And if you find yourself not currently in a community, we welcome you to join one, strengthening all of our souls during these moments of great uncertainty and fear.

Hillel wisely said, "Do not separate yourself from the community." Look deep inside your soul. We need you. We need one another. Next year and years after, may we look back at this time when we saw humanity join hand-in-hand, lifting up one another, and letting our fellow Jews know that together we are not alone. This is the narrative I pray we share with our children, grandchildren, and generations to come.

We question what our children will remember about this time, when faces are masked, parks are closed, and friendships maneuvered within a social distance of six feet. But we have a choice as to what our children will remember about our own roles in the Jewish community. May our children watch our actions, knowing that their families supported other Jews in need. May our children follow our examples, understanding that to be a Jew is to strengthen our community when the world feels bleak.

May our children be proud.

*Rabbi Nicole Guzik is a rabbi at Sinai Temple, a prominent Conservative synagogue in Los Angeles*

*This essay was originally published in the Los Angeles Jewish Journal. Reprinted with permission.*

## Letters to the Editor, continued

### An Expression of Underlying Ties Between Two Organizations

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires,

I write to thank you for your allocation this past March. As explained below, this support is important in terms of what it makes possible. It is also an expression of the underlying ties between our two organizations. On both levels, we deeply appreciate your support.

As a recap of our work: ORT and its affiliated schools and programs in some 30 countries touches the lives of 300,000. In Israel, the focus is on serving students in underserved school systems as a long-term strategy for countering poverty. As you may know, Israel's poverty rate is extraordinarily high in comparison with other developed countries. ORT's strategy for combatting poverty in Israel seems especially compelling in an economy that is so tied to high-tech. The results (measured by such data as improved success rates on the *bagrut* exam) are impressive.

Elsewhere in the world — the successor countries to the Soviet Union, other countries in Europe, Latin America and even Singapore — ORT schools attract students for their excellence in general studies but then provide Jewish content in both classroom studies and extracurricular activities. These are primarily non-observant Jews whose identity is at risk. The impact: deepened engagement in Jewish life (including other Jewish activities for teenagers), increased Aliyah rates, and basic family observance (things as simple as challah making).

At the center of these activities, our education experts provide curricula, consultation, teacher training, and cross-national summer school, competitions, and other educational programs. Some of these activities — consultation, teacher training, curricula development — have been especially needed during the coronavirus crisis. In addition, ORT has provided laptops for students and teachers for home use.

Of course, this work and the resulting impact depend on basic institutional funding from the Berkshires and other Federations and donors. I look forward to reporting back to you — both in data and hopefully through Zoom.

In the meantime, thank you so much.

Sincerely,  
James M. Lodge, Senior Development Officer  
World ORT  
New York, NY

### Thank You Federation for Generous Donations In Difficult Times From...

Reverend Jennifer Kimball, **Hinsdale Food Pantry**  
**The Becket Food Pantry**  
Fran Berasi (board member), **Al Nelson Friendship Center Food Pantry**  
(North Adams)  
**Huntington Food Pantry** (serving 60-70 families in Hampshire County)

### Their Families Needed Food

Dear Jewish Federation of the Berkshires,

It was amazing to open your envelope to find your check of assistance for the Cheshire Pantry.

Our pantry started with seven families. We anticipated maybe 30 to 35 families as our goal to support with good quality food, personal products, and paper products, plus fruits and vegetables in season.

Currently, we offer the pantry on the first Saturday of the month from 11 a.m. to noon. On July 4, we had 80 families drive through for food. We delivered food to 13 families, with six additional families coming in for emergency food during the week. When families are struggling, the main focus is on finances and food. Our families needed food. Additionally, our pantry is available 24/7 — all a person has to do is call if it is after hours or stop by the center.

Thank you for the support — it is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Carole A. Hilderbrand, Director  
Cheshire Council on Aging

### Your Caring Hearts and Continued Compassion

Friends,

The Salvation Army of Pittsfield would like to thank you for your generous donations for use in our emergency food services program. Thank you for your caring hearts and your continued compassion towards our neighbors in need.

May God bless you,  
Captain Elliott Higgins  
Commanding Officer Pittsfield Corps

**Thinking about Suicide? Help is available**

National Suicide Prevention Hotline  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Local Brien Center Crisis Hotline  
1-800-252-0277

Text a Crisis Counselor  
text TALK to 741741

More resources at  
[berkshirecoalition.org](http://berkshirecoalition.org)



# Your Federation Presents

## MANDYLICIOUS, *continued from page 1*

phone interview with JTA in 2019.

But a quick glance at her Instagram feed reveals how things have changed. Her more than 25,000 followers have come to rely on her to post photos of mouthwatering and whimsical challah creations with flavors such as red velvet and marshmallow hot chocolate.

Since starting Mandylicious Challah in 2013, Silverman has seen her enterprise grow both locally – delivering some 50 loaves every week in Sharon, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb – and internationally, dispensing challah-baking advice to people as far away as France, Peru and Thailand.

She spends about two days baking every week and an additional half a day on making deliveries on Friday before Shabbat.

Silverman is among a growing number of home bakers making a business out of their love of all things challah. Most post their interpretations of the traditional braided Shabbat and holiday loaves on social media, and reach local customers through word of mouth.

Silverman is entirely self-taught. The Orthodox baker started baking challah 13 years ago and started to experiment by decorating loaves with sprinkles and stuffing others with meat. In October 2013, at the urging of her friends, she started selling the challah locally.

A month later, for Thanksgiving, Silverman posted a photo on social media of a turkey-shaped



Mandy Silverman

challah with a pumpkin-flavored tummy. The photo was shared widely, leading people from nearby states to drive to Massachusetts to get their hands on one.

“Somehow that picture got very popular, so my business got very recognized,” she said.

Since then, Silverman has been slowly gaining customers.

“I got all the way to 250 [orders] for Rosh Hashanah,” she said. “At that point, I was like, ‘I’m so sorry.’ I hate telling people no.”

Silverman sells her loaves for \$5 to \$18, depending on flavor and size. But she says money isn’t the reason she does it.

“It’s enough that I feel like it’s worth my time, but it’s definitely not the main source of income for my house,” said Silverman, whose husband works in marketing. “The payment is so much more than money. It’s helping people, being a part of their lives.”

## Sculptor of Children's Souls: Janusz Korczak

On Thursday, September 10 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., join Marcia Talmage Schneider as she talks about her book *Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children's Souls*. She'll tell the tragic story of Dr. Korczak, a Polish Jewish educator, children's author, and pedagogue known as *Pan Doktor* (“Mr. Doctor”) or *Stary Doktor* (“Old Doctor”). After spending many years working as director of an orphanage in Warsaw, he refused sanctuary repeatedly and stayed with his orphans when the entire population of the institution was sent from the Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp by the Nazis in 1942.

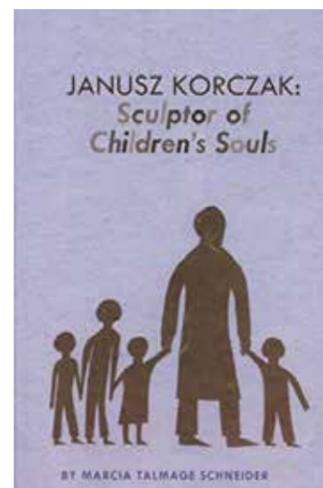
At press time, all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs were scheduled to be presented via Zoom or other platforms – please check your emails from Federation to find the necessary links, or visit our calendar of events online at [www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org).

Marcia Talmage Schneider pursued Judaic Studies at New York University, as well as

at Hebrew University in Israel and the Jewish Theological Seminary. She lived in Israel and was an educator for 40 years in both Jewish day schools and in New York City public schools.

Upon retirement, she went to Israel where she traced Korczak's legacy through firsthand interviews with ten graduates of Korczak's Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. It was these interviews which were the basis of her book *Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children's Souls*. Talmage Schneider was one of the founding members of the Janusz Korczak Association of the United States. She presented at the International Korczak Association in Warsaw talking about the contents of her book and at Columbia University's Department of Slavic Studies. She also wrote a chapter in *Nurture, Care, Respect, and Trust: Transformative Pedagogy Inspired by Janusz Korczak*.

She writes: “I’ll speak about how I first encountered



Korczak's story, sharing his story and that of the ten people whom I interviewed for the book (by the way, only one is still alive today in Tel Aviv). I'll recount their telling of what it was like to live in the orphanage, how Korczak's philosophy, methods and personality influenced them in their family and professional lives.”

## A Grief Sublime

In conversation with Beth Robbins and Matt Tannenbaum

On Thursday, October 1 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., Matt Tannenbaum of The Bookstore in Lenox will speak with Beth Robbins about her memoir *A Grief Sublime*, which is about her life following the sudden, tragic death of her husband in an automobile accident.

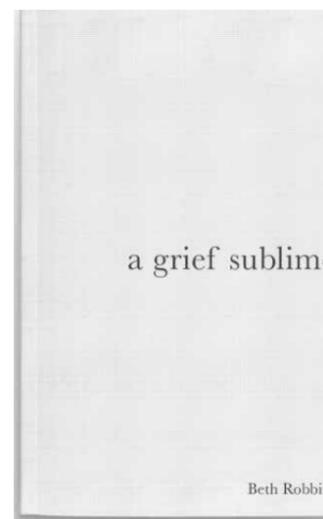
At press time, all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs were scheduled to be presented via Zoom or other platforms – please check your emails from Federation to find the necessary links, or visit our calendar of events online at [www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org).

After the sudden death of her husband – Steve “Sproutman” Meyerowitz – of nearly 30 years, author Beth Robbins turned to writing for comfort. And to Keats, Whitman, Melville, and Dickinson. What began as a mourning rite for a grieving widow eventually transformed into a lyrical memoir

of childhood, marriage, grief, and ultimately resurrection.

In 1993, Tannenbaum lost his wife to cancer, becoming a single dad to his two young daughters, ages 7 and 3. He says he entered a time of grief for which he had little experience. In that time, his family and that of Robbins and Meyerowitz became close. “It’s an honor to sit with Beth now, these many years later, to speak of loss and grief,” says Tannenbaum, “as we have both lived in that place, knowing something of its landscape.”

Join Robbins and Tannenbaum for a conversation about life, love, grief, and connection. They will speak about the loss of a spouse, creative engagement and the way it helps, the gifts of loss, poetry, and humor. Robbins will do a couple of short readings from her book.



## Volunteers Are Vital!

Can you help with Rosh Hashanah gift bags?

By Susan Frisch Lehrer / Coordinator of Volunteers

We know that many of our seniors are still isolated and we want to bring them a special treat before the High Holidays. Volunteers are needed to deliver Rosh Hashanah gift bags to our seniors at home and in facilities across the Berkshires. Please let us know if you can assist with this important mitzvah.

The bags may be picked up at our Federation office, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on:

- Tuesday, September 15
- Wednesday, September 16
- Thursday, September 17

We ask that all volunteers wear masks (during pickup and delivery) and ring the front door bell of our office. You may deliver at your convenience. Please contact me at [slehrer@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:slehrer@jewishberkshires.org) or (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 to let us know of your availability. Thank you!

For further information on all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs, please call Nancy Maurice Rogers, Program Director, at (413) 442-4360, ext.15.

Shanah Tovah



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## Your Federation Presents

### How Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors and 3GNY Work Intergenerationally

On Monday, October 5 from 6:45 to 7:45 p.m., Leora Klein and Farah Kraus of 3GNY, a group composed of the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, will lead a panel discussion of five educators about how grandchildren of Holocaust survivors can effectively educate the next generation to ensure that future generations hear actual stories of their grandparents' survival.

At press time, all Jewish Federation of the Berkshires programs were scheduled to be presented via Zoom or other platforms – please check your emails from Federation to find the necessary links, or visit our calendar of events online at [www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org).

From the 3GNY website: "As a living link, we preserve the legacies and the lessons of the Holocaust. Our mission is to educate diverse communities about the perils of intolerance and to provide a supportive forum for the descendants of survivors. We ensure that future generations will hear actual stories of our grandparents' survival, so that others can experience the human face of the Holocaust, as well as understand its details. We provide the legacy, testimony and context for how this event is viewed and discussed today."

To accomplish these goals, 3GNY creates forums where members meet, learn, connect and share ideas. Founded in 2005 with a group of six, 3GNY's membership now exceeds 2,000. From the website:

"We have diverse programs, including museum tours, film screenings, theater engagements, discussion groups, book readings, visits and dialogue with survivors, Shabbat dinners, Jewish cultural events, intergenerational gatherings, genealogy workshops and field trips."

**Leora Klein** is the grandchild of four Holocaust survivors and the first American in her family. She is a founding member of 3GNY and ran WEDU (We Educate) for five years. Leora worked at The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, where she led guided tours helping students navigate their first introduction to the Holocaust. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, where she received her BA. After completing her MA in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia, Leora taught middle school and high



**3GNY** Descendants of Holocaust Survivors

school English Language and Literature at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School. She is currently on the Heschel Holocaust Commemoration Committee.

**Farah Kraus** is the grandchild of two Holocaust survivors, Eva and Harry Kostre. She initially became involved with 3GNY in 2010 to participate in the WEDU program. She is continually amazed at the insightful and thoughtful responses from the students she speaks to. Farah majored in Finance and Business Economics at Indiana University. She currently works in her family accounting practice and lives in Brooklyn.

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LIMIT 1

## HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES



### The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires wishes all a happy, healthy, and peaceful 5781

Due to the ongoing coronavirus restrictions and protocols, most of our local congregations will observe this year's High Holy Days largely or entirely online. The schedules and events listed were provided by local congregations in mid-August – please contact the congregations directly for more information about:

- Connecting online
- Ticketing fees and deadlines
- Registration requirements and deadlines
- Confirmation of times and events
- Socially-distanced in-person events
- Details about other planned holiday season programming that may not be listed.

The congregational directory with website and contact information is on page 9.

Candle lighting and havdalah times are for Pittsfield and were taken from the Hebc calendar.

# L'Shana Tova!

### High Holy Day Dates

Holiday	Date	Candle Lighting	Havdalah
Selichot	Saturday, September 12 at nightfall		
Erev Rosh Hashanah	Friday, September 18	6:40 p.m.	
Rosh Hashanah – First Day	Saturday, September 19	7:39 p.m.	
Rosh Hashanah – Second Day	Sunday, September 20		7:37 p.m.
Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre	Sunday, September 27	6:24 p.m.	
Yom Kippur	Monday, September 28		7:23 p.m.
Erev Sukkot	Friday, October 2	6:02 p.m.	
Sukkot – First Day Yom Tov	Saturday, October 3	7:14 p.m.	
Sukkot – Second Day Yom Tov	Sunday, October 4		7:12 p.m.
Sukkot – Chol Ha'Moed	Monday, October 5 – Thursday, October 8		
Hoshanah Rabbah	Friday, October 9	6:03 p.m.	
Shemini Atzeret	Saturday, October 10	7:02 p.m.	
Simchat Torah	Sunday, October 11		7 p.m.

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires recently approved \$12,000 in High Holiday Access grants to support technology upgrades, support, and other services to help our local congregations offer community members the widest access possible to High Holy Day services and experiences. Grantees to date include: Chabad of the Berkshires, Congregation Beth Israel, Hevreh of Southern Berkshires, Knesset Israel, and Temple Anshe Amunim.

### Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

Responding to the events of this year, different in so many ways, this Reform congregation in Great Barrington has decided to open its services to all regardless of payment or donation. All services, to be led by Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch and Rabbi Jodie Gordon, will be streamed on Hevreh's website, at [hevreh.org/holidays](http://hevreh.org/holidays). There, you'll find a full list of events and how to access each. Some will require prior registration, some will be streamed directly on the page.

"As Hevreh continues to add opportunities to aid all in feeling a piece of holiness from Selichot through Simchat Torah," says Rabbi Hirsch, "be sure to check our website regularly for updates and new information."

#### SERVICES

- Selichot** – See story on page 15 for details.
- Erev Rosh Hashanah** – A seder at 6 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service at 10 a.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – Family service at 9 a.m.
- Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – Service at 7:30 p.m.
- Yom Kippur** – Family service at 9 a.m. Service at 10:30 a.m. Yizkor at 3:30 p.m. Neilah at 5 p.m.



### Temple Anshe Amunim

Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield will celebrate the Jewish High Holy Days with a full schedule of services – clergy, staff, and lay leaders have prepared virtual and socially distant experiences for participants. Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch will lead with prayer and inspiration.

Cantor Rachel Slusky will return as cantorial soloist this year, singing ancient melodies and modern compositions. TAA will feature the voices of its volunteer choir, coordinated and conducted by dedicated music director, Dr. Alan Gold.

TAA will also prepare robust materials to enable personal prayer at home.

Says Rabbi Liz: "All are welcome to celebrate the holiday's second day with 'Rosh Hashanah in Nature.' This innovative experience offers an opportunity for participants to connect spiritually with nature. Please come in appropriate and comfortable attire, and watch our webpage for the most up-to-date information about this socially distant, in-person gathering."

Please visit the TAA website, or contact the Temple office by email or by phone to arrange for an all-inclusive access pass. Says Rabbi Liz: "We welcome all who wish to join us for the holidays to do so."



### Congregation Beth Israel

Congregation Beth Israel's online services will be led by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat. This Reform congregation will use *Days of Awe*, the *machzor* put together by Rabbi Barenblat. All in-person events will be masked and socially distanced.

#### SERVICES

- Selichot** – See story on page 15 for details.
- Erev Rosh Hashanah** – Zoom seder at 7:30 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service at 10 a.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – Service at 10 a.m. *Tashlich* at the river at noon. Outdoor family service at 2 p.m.
- Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – Service at 6 p.m.
- Yom Kippur** – Service at 10 a.m. Yizkor takes place at the end of the morning service. Afternoon service at 3 p.m. Ne'ilah at 6 p.m., after which the Zoom link will remain live for socializing.



#### SERVICES

- Selichot** – See story on page 15 for details.
- Erev Rosh Hashanah** – "Pre-neg," candle lighting, and holiday greeting at 6:30 p.m. Evening prayer experience at 7 p.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Torah study at 9 a.m. Congregational prayer experience at 10 a.m.
- Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – "Rosh Hashanah in Nature," with *tashlich* at 10:30 a.m. – please visit TAA's website for details on location.
- Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – Pre-fast "dinner," candle lighting, and holiday greeting at 6:30 p.m. Kol Nidre prayer experience at 7 p.m.
- Yom Kippur** – Morning meditation at 9 a.m. Morning prayer experience at 10 a.m.. Afternoon service led by Temple Youth at 3 p.m. Yizkor at 4 p.m. Neilah at 5 p.m., followed by break-the-fast virtual gathering.

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## HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES

### Knesset Israel



"At a time that we usually integrate, we now have to be separate," says Rabbi David Weiner, the spiritual leader of this egalitarian Conservative congregation in Pittsfield that over the summer developed an array of offerings that will give participants choices on how to navigate through this unusual holiday season.

He explains that his congregation will conduct streamlined services via Zoom, while also providing additional opportunities to meaningfully prepare for and then connect with the themes and spirit of the High Holy Days. Links to online classes, *divrei Torah*, music and video, and family programming will be sent out via email before and during the holidays.

Rabbi Weiner says that in normal years, immersion in a long formal service is what many people want and expect on the High Holy Days. This year, however, offers an opportunity to identify what one needs from these holidays, find a way to plug in, "and give what you want to give." KI's approach, which aligns with engagement strategies developed within the Conservative movement, will be to provide different ways to help participants develop a personal path through the season.

#### SERVICES

*Yizkor* for Yom Kippur will be conducted on Sunday, September 27 at 10:30 a.m.

**Selichot** – 8:15 p.m.

**Erev Rosh Hashanah** – Service at 5:45 p.m.

**Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service Shacharit 8:30 a.m., Torah service approximately 9:15 a.m.

**Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – Morning same as Rosh Hashanah 1st Day, with shofar during Torah service. Family service at 3 p.m. *Tashlich* at 4:15 p.m. (meet at KI, then to Pomeroy Avenue Bridge).

**Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – 6:15 p.m.

**Yom Kippur** – Family service 9 to 10:30 a.m. *Shacharit* 11:15 a.m., with Torah Service after 12:15 p.m. *Mincha* at 4:30 p.m., *Neilah* at 5:55 p.m. *Tekiah Gedolah/Maariv/Havdalah* at 7:20 p.m.



### Congregation Ahavath Sholom



Rabbi Barbara Cohen will lead all-online services from the Reconstructionist congregation's historic building in Great Barrington. "Within the online structure, we are striving to create a unique experience with traditional and contemporary liturgical elements, singing, poetry, and prayer," says Rabbi Cohen. "We will be offering the spiritual quality and meaningful experience that you have come to cherish from our Ahavath Sholom services in a more time-considerate way."

Both Ahavath Sholom members and non-members need to register for services by email (casoffice15@gmail.com) or by mail (Congregation Ahavath Sholom, P.O. Box 464, Great Barrington, MA 01230).

#### SERVICES

**Selichot** – Study and service at 7 p.m.

**Erev Rosh Hashanah** – Service at 6:30 p.m. (60 minutes)

**Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service at 10 a.m. (90 minutes)

**Kol Nidre** – 6 p.m. (60 minutes)

**Yom Kippur** – Service at 10 a.m. (90 minutes)

### Chabad of the Berkshires

Now in its 16th year, Chabad of the Berkshires welcomes all to its friendly traditional services at its Pittsfield location, **which will be held in an outdoor tent this year**. Co-directors Rabbi Levi and Sara Volovik say membership is not required - "According to tradition, at the New Year the Doors of Heaven are open - G-d accepts all prayers, from anyone. We open our doors, as well."

However, an RSVP is required to participate. Due to COVID-19 precautions, space is limited and seats must be set according to social distancing requirements. *Masks will be required*. Family members from the same household will be able to sit together - all others must remain 6 feet apart.

Readings from the *machzor* (holiday prayer book) will be in Hebrew and English.



#### SERVICES

**Rosh Hashanah 1st Day** – Service at 10 a.m.

**Rosh Hashanah 2nd Day** – Same as Rosh Hashanah 1st Day, with Shofar at approximately 11 a.m.

**Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre** – Service at 6:30 p.m.

**Yom Kippur** – Service at 10 a.m. (*Yizkor* at 11:30 a.m.). Afternoon service and *Ne'ilah* at 5 p.m. (drinks and pre-packaged cookies to be served after services)



### Welcome to the Jewish Berkshires

Everyone is welcome to attend services and events at any of the organizations listed here.

Please call the organizations directly to confirm service times or to inquire about membership.

Learn more about our Jewish community and find great events on the community calendar at:

[JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG](http://JEWISHBERKSHIRES.ORG)

## BERKSHIRE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

#### Berkshire Minyan

*Lay-led egalitarian minyan* held at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire, 270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA (413) 229-3618, [berkshireminyan.org](http://berkshireminyan.org)

#### Berkshire Hills Hadassah

P.O. Box 187, Pittsfield, MA (413) 443-4386, [Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com](mailto:Berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com)

#### B'nai B'rith Lodge, No. 326

**Chabad of the Berkshires**  
450 South St., Pittsfield, MA (413) 499-9899, [jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com)

#### Congregation Ahavath Sholom

*Reconstructionist*  
North St., Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-4197, [ahavathsholom.com](http://ahavathsholom.com)

#### Congregation Beth Israel

*Reform*  
53 Lois St., North Adams, MA (413) 663-5830, [cbiweb.org](http://cbiweb.org)

#### Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

*Reform*  
270 State Rd., Great Barrington, MA (413) 528-6378, [hevreh.org](http://hevreh.org)

#### Israel Philatelist Society

c/o Dr. Ed Helitzer,  
(413) 447-7622

#### Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

196 South St., Pittsfield, MA (413) 442-4360, [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)

#### Jewish War Veterans

Commander Robert Waldheim  
(413) 822-4546, [sellit4@aol.com](mailto:sellit4@aol.com)

#### Knesset Israel

*Conservative*  
16 Colt Rd., Pittsfield, MA (413) 445-4872, [knessetisrael.org](http://knessetisrael.org)

#### Temple Anshe Amunim

*Reform*  
26 Broad St., Pittsfield, MA (413) 442-5910, [ansheamunim.org](http://ansheamunim.org)

## LOCAL NEWS

## Harold Grinspoon Foundation's LIFE & LEGACY® Jewish Initiative Secures More Than \$1 Billion in Commitments in Less Than Eight Years

National Director Arlene D. Schiff on the program's success and the current state of Jewish philanthropy

AGAWAM – A legacy giving initiative that supports the building of endowments with the goal of sustaining valued organizations and vibrant Jewish communities for the next generation and beyond announced today that it has leveraged more than \$1 billion in legacy commitments.

In the eight years since the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF) launched LIFE & LEGACY®, sixty-three Jewish communities across the United States and Canada have secured almost 28,000 legacy commitments from 17,000 individuals to support 680 organizations. Of the \$1 billion in commitments, more than \$112 million has already been placed in endowments. Amid the pandemic and economic downturn, these commitments are even more critical to the long-term stability of vital Jewish organizations across North America.

In challenging times like these, endowments provide organizations with the financial stability to meet evolving needs. Legacy commitments ensure that organizations providing impactful programs and services during both calm and turbulent times have the necessary resources to adapt.

"The cooperation and collaboration fostered by LIFE

& LEGACY over the past eight years as local organizations work toward a shared goal of endowment building is especially critical now," said Arlene D. Schiff, national director, LIFE & LEGACY. "Even in the midst of so much disruption and uncertainty, we continue to empower many generous and committed individuals and families to give back to the Jewish organizations that have played and are playing an important role in their lives."

LIFE & LEGACY provides training, support and monetary incentives to Jewish organizations that want to build permanent endowments and ensure that legacy giving becomes a social norm in their community. Surpassing the \$1 billion milestone is the tip of the iceberg. In addition to securing financial commitments, LIFE & LEGACY brings together organizations that have previously seen each other as competitors. The organizations become trusted partners who cooperate, share resources, learn from, support and celebrate one another.

"Providing Jewish organizations with a strategy to help secure their long-term financial goals is absolutely vital, especially now in the middle of an economic crisis," said Harold Grinspoon, the founder

of HGF. "Supporting our Jewish institutions is critical to ensuring future generations are able to enjoy our rich culture and heritage. I am thrilled that LIFE & LEGACY is motivating donors to make legacy commitments that will allow organizations to build endowments that will sustain vibrant Jewish communities for years to come."

### A Conversation with Arlene Schiff

Arlene Schiff, a Lenox resident and past executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, took over the helm of the LIFE & LEGACY program in 2013. In that time, she has crisscrossed the country to work with Jewish communities on ensuring their futures through legacy giving. When she last spoke with the BJV in 2017, LIFE & LEGACY gifts totaling approximately \$500 million had been secured, a figure that has since doubled.

The BJV asked her a few questions about the program's success, as well as the current state of Jewish philanthropy.

### BJV: What has happened in the last three years to create such momentum with LIFE & LEGACY?

**Schiff:** Some of it is that we've taken on 10 or 12 new communities and if you multiply that by 10, that's 120 more organizations that are out there having conversations. As if each of those communities is trying to get close to 200 commitments in the first couple of years, just adding that has increased the momentum.

### BJV: Has it been easier getting buy-in over the last few years?

**Schiff:** Yes, in some ways because when we started, there were communities who were lined up who knew this was something they wanted to do and just didn't know how to do it, and were looking for that support. Then, obviously, we gained momentum and more communities wanted to join once they saw that it worked. I would say that last year was a slow year. We had fewer new communities, and this year we actually have no one new starting this fall. That might have been the pandemic, but also I think we're running low on communities. Because we partner with Jewish Federations and Jewish community foundations, we sort of saturated the market. There are more communities out there that could possibly do it if they were interested, but as you know, Federations

are dealing with a lot of things ongoing, and making legacy giving a priority in some communities, it's just not there yet.

**BJV: There would seem to be two paths I'd like to ask you about. One, if the pandemic continues, how is LIFE & LEGACY going to adapt in the future? Two, if things get back to a more normal pace, what do you see in future?**

**Schiff:** So we're looking at a variety of things. We're still outreaching to those communities that we feel could benefit from participating in the program. We are also beginning to work with one national Jewish organization and have done some outreach to others to see if would like to partner with us to learn how to integrate legacy giving into the culture of their organizations. We know that if we partner with national organizations, it will filter down to the local level, and also that local organizations are filtering up. So given that our goal is to make legacy giving a social norm in the Jewish community, overall we've decided to try to partner with some of the national organizations and it looks like we'll be launching our first one of those this fall.

LIFE & LEGACY, continued on next page

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## Life Can Present Challenges Sometimes, a little help along the way can make things easier

Our community social worker, Jill Goldstein, LICSW, offers case management, information/referral and consultation to help Jewish community members find support and access to services to help with such needs as:

- ♥ Coping with life's transitions
- ♥ Aging and caregiving issues
- ♥ Relationship difficulties
- ♥ Adjustment to new living situation
- ♥ Living with illness
- ♥ Grief and loss
- ♥ Depression or anxiety

If you are struggling with one of these or other issues, Jill can help you find community resources to assist you. Jill has a Master's degree in social work (MSW) and is licensed as an independent clinical social worker (LICSW).



If you or someone you know needs a little help, give us a call:

Jill Goldstein, MSW, LICSW  
(413) 442-4360, Ext 17  
[j.goldstein@jfswm.org](mailto:j.goldstein@jfswm.org)

All services are free and completely confidential



LOCAL NEWS

LIFE & LEGACY, *continued from previous page*

We're also starting to integrate [the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's] JCamp 180 program, which has always had a legacy component. Now we're merging the programs. We're going to be offering camps the LIFE & LEGACY curriculum, which is a little different than what they've been doing in the past. We're looking to take on new camps that have never done legacy through JCamp 180, and to also work with the camps that have been part of the program in the past on formalization. That is something they never did – moving the donor from a letter of intent to legally putting their commitment in place. Lastly, I would say we're going to be exploring a variety of ways in which we can partner with the communities that we've been working with today that have completed the 4-year LIFE & LEGACY curriculum to see what we can do beyond that four years to make sure that legacy giving remains a priority in each community.

**BJV: I'd like to turn to a broader question about the current state of Jewish philanthropy from your perspective. How do you see what's going on now, and what might the long-term future hold?**

**Schiff:** Well, I think that those people who are blessed

with the capacity to give are giving and giving more because they see that the needs are greater. I don't envision that changing.

People may be reevaluating their giving. I've heard that some individuals who've given specifically to the Jewish community now, because of the pandemic or social justice issues, have chosen to include those causes in their philanthropic giving. Legacy giving will remain a priority. We know that the pandemic has led more people to think about planning for the future. More people are writing wills, more people are planning. People are a little worried – they're feeling vulnerable and also don't know what the future holds; and so more people are thinking about what they want to put in place should something happen to them.

It's a great time actually to be having those conversations with loyal donors who have been giving to you annually for a number of years, to remind them that they can also leave a legacy. Given the economic situation there will be donors who, because they've lost their job or other reasons, aren't able to give annually, but will have assets for legacy giving, which is how they might choose to participate until they are ready to give annually again.

Rising Above Race and Color

Meet Montana's Chabad emissary, who is raising five adopted children in Big Sky Country

On Sunday, September 13 at 7:30 p.m., Chabad of the Berkshires welcomes Chavie Bruk who, along with her husband Rabbi Chaim Bruk, serves as Chabad's emissary to Montana.

Via Zoom, she'll share her remarkable story about raising five adopted children – one of mixed race, another with a rare genetic disorder – in Bozeman, a remote town noted for its livability and proximity to outdoor recreation areas.

The Bruks moved to Bozeman in 2009 to establish a Chabad outpost to serve the approximately 2000 Jews living in Montana. After adopting two infant daughters, the Bruks became a go-to source for information about adoption within the Chabad community, and subsequently added three more children to their family: Menny, who is biracial; Shoshanna, already a teen at the time of her adoption; and Chana Leya, who was born in 2017.

"When we found out that we couldn't have children biologically, I accepted that," Chavie said in an interview with *Lubavitch International*, "but I didn't accept that we would never be parents. Every child who has come into our life is meant to be with us. We



The Bruk family

have so much to give them. It happens to everyone all the time; things don't go according to plan. Sometimes it's minor stuff, sometimes it's big, like the infertility, special needs, and medical challenges we face. We all have to learn the skills to adapt."

Chavie Bruk will share her fascinating story, and explore and answer questions about

being an adoptive parent, adoption within Jewish history, infertility, and what it has been like to raise a blended family within the Orthodox tradition in a vast state with not many Jewish residents.

Please check Chabad's website, [jewishberkshires.com](http://jewishberkshires.com), for more information and links to this online event.

*Check out our website!*  
[www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org)  
 For calendar listings and events

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# Your Federation Presents

## Leafy Trails Sheltered Families on a Steamy Great Barrington StoryWalk® at Housatonic Flats

On July 19, families enjoyed a (rather warm) day in nature at the Berkshire Natural Resources Council's Housatonic Flats property in Great Barrington, reading Jamie Korngold's summer camp adventure *Sadie, Ori, and Nuggles Go to Camp*. A good time was had by all – and many thanks to SoCo Creamery in Great Barrington for donating ice cream to be enjoyed later. The outing was sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires and its PJ Library program.



### Affiliate with a Congregation.

You, the congregation, and the Jewish community benefit when you do.

- YOU GET the Jewish enrichment and spiritual nourishment you are seeking.
- YOU GET the rabbinical support you need in times of joy and sorrow.
- YOU RECONNECT with your community and your Jewish roots.
- YOU CAN PARTICIPATE in a variety of services, classes, and programs that keep Judaism alive and flourishing in Berkshire County.
- THE CONGREGATION IS THE INSTITUTION that has sustained the Jewish people for two millenia throughout the world. Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Reform, the Jewish community wins when you join the congregation of your choice.

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires encourages you to affiliate.

LOCAL NEWS

# A New Early Childhood Center Opens at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire’s new early childhood center (ECC) is now open to provide quality childcare and learning for infants, toddler, and preschoolers in an intimate, child-centered environment. The full-week program is open to children from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will be licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

Open to the community at large, the ECC is housed within Hevreh, a Reform Jewish synagogue.

Ellen Marcus, ECC director, writes that “Early childhood experiences provide the foundation for a child’s lifetime. Our play-based, emergent curriculum fosters exploration and cultivates children’s natural curiosity.”

In an interview with the BJV, she added: “There is a Jewish thread to our curriculum tied to three Jewish values that are, in fact, universal values: Talmud Torah, the instilling of curiosity and a love of learning; *gemilut chassadim*, the teaching of kindness, which totally dovetails with what an ECC should be doing; and *derech eretz*, teaching

cooperation and community participation. Those are all foundational.”

Marcus says that Hevreh, where she has worked for a year, is embarking on this program after identifying a need for licensed childhood facilities generally throughout Western Massachusetts. Visit the Department of Early Education’s website and search for a licensed facility within 20 miles of Great Barrington, she says, and you’ll be surprised how few there are.

“There are other ways of providing child care – somebody in the family can stay home or you can hire somebody to come into your home,” she says. But a licensed ECC is not about “simply ensuring the safety of your child, it’s much more – and the science is there to prove it. It’s so clear that this is the foundational stage for so much – brain science, social, emotional, and academic [growth] across the board.”

Marcus reports that the congregation has planned for years, and fundraised in order to bring its classrooms up to code for very young children. Achieving its vision for the ECC was abetted by

the input of Hevreh’s rabbis, Neil Hirsch and Jodie Gordon (also Hevreh’s director of education), both of whom have young children. The congregation decided it wanted to implement its own program, not one contracted through an outside corporate provider of day care services. Marcus says that “when I came on board, I was taking this vision and establishing some of the practicalities. I was in the very fortunate position of being able to create something from the ground up.”

Enrollment of a child includes membership at Hevreh, which Marcus says will allow families to sustain a connection to the congregation until the children are old enough to enroll in Hebrew school.

Marcus shared the following information about what families might expect:

The characteristics that help create strong family ties – love, trust, time spent together, communication, appreciation for one another, healthy limits and more love

– are the very same traits we seek to foster within our classroom community. Daily schedules are individualized in our Infant Room to best meet each child’s sleep and nutritional needs. A typical day in our Toddler Room and mixed-age Preschool Room provides an array of emergent curriculum activities and is structured to include time for Meeting, Choice, Snack, Outdoor Play, Story, Lunch and Quiet Time. Our Preschool curriculum incorporates kindergarten readiness skills within the play-based experiences.

In addition to our small group setting, we benefit from our spacious grounds. Hevreh’s “backyard” includes a fenced area for outdoor play as well as plenty of space to accommodate nature walks and outdoor activities.

The health and safety of our children and staff is paramount and we will be in full compliance with the Massachusetts EEC requirements to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We



Ellen Marcus

have implemented procedures to help protect everyone’s well-being, including daily health screening prior to entry; adult use of masks and other PPE; frequent handwashing; cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing of play areas and supplies; physical distancing; staggered curbside drop-off and pick-up; and stable classroom groupings.

Registration is underway. For more information, contact Ellen Marcus at emarcus@hevreh.org or (413) 528-6378. You can also find out more at Hevreh.org/ECC.

## Weekly Lunch N Learn Over Zoom, with Hevreh

On Wednesdays at 11:45 a.m. (September 9, 16, 23, & 30 and October 7, join Hevreh of Southern Berkshire for free Zoom classes at lunchtime.

Says Rabbi Neil Hirsch: “Our tradition teaches that when two (or more)

sit together and discuss words of Torah, God dwells with them. Study is one of the many ways we as a Jewish community experience the sacred and the spiritual.”

Contact info@hevreh.org to receive the weekly Zoom link to participate.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



### HELP US MAKE IT A SWEET NEW YEAR THIS ROSH HASHANAH

- **KIDS DECORATE Rosh Hashanah Cards.** You can create your own cards or decorate a template of a card to be included in holiday care packages delivered to elders in our community. Email contact below to request a template to decorate. Cards can be dropped off at Federation’s office or scan and email by Sept 13.
- **DELIVER Rosh Hashanah care packages.** Packages, which include apples, honey, challah and cards, can be delivered to assisted living facilities, hospitals, and at home seniors at your leisure between Sept 15-17. These will be “no contact” deliveries.

SIGN UP TODAY! Contact Susan Frisch Lehrer at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14 slehrer@jewishberkshires.org



The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires’ Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network connects community members of all ages with Mitzvah opportunities to make a difference in our community.

**Jewish Federation OF THE BERKSHIRES**

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**LOCAL NEWS**

**The Berkshires' Reform Congregations to Celebrate Selichot Together**

On Saturday, September 12 at 8 p.m., Congregation Beth Israel, Temple Anshe Amunim, and Hevreh of Southern Berkshire will co-sponsor "Selichot: An Evening of Spiritual Preparation."

From the congregations: "Selichot invites us to open our hearts as we prepare to welcome the new year. Join the rabbis of Reform congregations across Berkshire County for a heart-opening Selichot celebration. Our celebration will include havdalah, poetry, prayer, and music to help each of us move into the Days of Awe with intention. We invite you to set up a sacred space for yourself as you join us via Zoom, as well as paper and pen for some reflective writing."

Details about how to connect will be posted on each congregation's website. Please see page 9 for the congregational listings.

**Grant Deadline for Wassermann-Streit Y'DIYAH Memorial Fund, November 1**

SHEFFIELD — The Wassermann-Streit Y'DIYAH Memorial Fund is currently accepting grant applications for projects that offer the general public the opportunity to gain knowledge of Judaism in a meaningful and enjoyable way. This might be through programs or material that illustrate traditional practices, holidays, music, art, literature, theater, cinema, documented history, etc.

The goal of the fund is to offer the public an understanding of traditional Judaism that might contribute to knowledge of differences while sharing commonalities inherent in all people, and to correct misconceptions and false notions leading to manifestations of bias.

Individuals, schools, libraries and other nonprofit organizations in Berkshire, Columbia (NY), northwest Litchfield (CT) and northeast Dutchess (NY) counties are invited to apply by November 1 at [www.berkshiretaconic.org/YDIYAH](http://www.berkshiretaconic.org/YDIYAH).

**Hevreh's Religious School Starts this September**

GREAT BARRINGTON – Hevreh of Southern Berkshire has announced that the first day of religious school for its students will be Sunday, September 13, and has shared its broader plan for Youth and Family Education programs for the 2020-2021 school year.

"As we anticipate being able to gather in-person in limited ways," says Rabbi Jodie Gordon, "we will consider alternatives to the traditional grade-level specific classes. Our programming will take place using a camp-style model of units structured around age/developmental stage."

Rabbi Gordon explained how four learning goals this school year will guide students through the uncertainty and find the magic in Judaism:

- Jewish Joy
- Hebrew Skills
- Self Care and Community Responsibility through a Jewish lens
- Building toward Justice

"Our dedicated teaching faculty is ready to facilitate spaces where students can create and deepen relationships with near-peer groups," she adds "both in person when safe and in a virtual classroom (hybrid)."

For 3 and 4-year-olds, Tiny Talmidim serves as an entryway to a love of Jewish learning. All students K-12 are encouraged to sign up for Religious School, which encompasses cornerstone learning and the 8-12 grade confirmation class. Hebrew learners in 3-7 grades

preparing for b'nai mitzvah can sign up for Hebrew skills and be placed with a teacher and/or cohort that will support their learning.

"Above all else, we hold our commitment to *pikuah nefesh*, the Jewish value of preserving life," adds Rabbi Gordon. "All decisions and possibilities will be considered with best practices from the Massachusetts Department of Health and CDC guidelines in mind."

To discuss your family's needs and expectations for this school year, contact Rabbi Gordon at [jgordon@hevreh.org](mailto:jgordon@hevreh.org) or Jodie Friedman at [jfriedman@hevreh.org](mailto:jfriedman@hevreh.org).

To learn more and register, visit [hevreh.org/family](http://hevreh.org/family).

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**Jewish Federation**  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

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**Financial Assistance Available**

No one could have anticipated the financial impact this pandemic would have. The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has provided a safety net for our Jewish community for more than 80 years and we are here to help individuals and families through this difficult time.

The Federation is offering onetime financial assistance to help Jewish community members struggling with essential needs such as food, utilities, mortgage and rent. Additional critical needs may be considered. Interest free loans are also available.

Any Jewish community member who has been impacted financially by the pandemic may be eligible. You do not have to belong to a synagogue or be part of the Federation to apply. Requests will be assessed on a case by case basis and are per household. All inquiries regarding assistance will be kept strictly confidential.

To inquire about assistance please visit

[jewishberkshires.org/covid19-assist](http://jewishberkshires.org/covid19-assist)

## OBITUARIES

### Alden "Elie" Hammerling, 79, kind, compassionate, supported local arts and culture

PITTSFIELD – Alden "Elie" Hammerling, 79, died late Saturday night, July 18. Born in New York City on October 1, 1940 to Sol and Gertrude (Bernstein) Hammerling, Elie was a kind and compassionate man, deeply committed to his family and his community. He genuinely loved people and found it easy to start a conversation with just about anyone. This openness to engage total strangers embarrassed his kids, but Elie was a natural people person who treated everyone as you would an old friend. Getting someone to smile made his day, which explains why Elie has such an extensive circle of friends.

Elie met Myrna (Galler) Hammerling in 1957 while attending Wingate High School. Myrna was distributing band folders while Elie was playing trombone. Myrna began noticing that Elie had a big smile whenever she came around. That attraction lasted their entire lives. The two dated through high school, were together at Brooklyn College, and married on April 4, 1963. Elie and Myrna have been at each other's side, laughing, loving, and learning together for 62 years, recently celebrating their 57th wedding anniversary.

Elie earned his B.A. in 1962 from Brooklyn College and his M.S. in Administrative Medicine at Columbia University in 1970. From 1970-1976, he served as vice president, ambulatory care services, at Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan. Elie's career path was borne out of his passion to help make a difference within his community. Elie's strength lay in his ability to work with people to create collaborative solutions that affected real change in health care delivery.

During his college years, Elie loved sports and was quite athletic. Standing 6'2", he was known as a graceful left-hander who later earned the title of Collegiate Doubles Handball Champion of New York with his partner (now Hollywood director) Joel Zwick. In addition, Elie enjoyed being a sportswriter for the school newspaper, *The Olympian*.

In 1976, Elie, Myrna and their two young children relocated from Brooklyn to Pittsfield to start a new job and a new life in the Berkshires. Elie was vice president of planning and administrative services at Berkshire Medical Center for a decade, where he helped with the transition to Berkshire Health Systems. In 1986, Elie became the associate director

of administrative services at Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth, a residential treatment center for boys. He both provided oversight for the residential health care programs and developed and directed the James Bell Training Institute to provide continuing education for mental health professionals.

From 1998-2004, Elie founded and led Blue Moon Seminars, a company dedicated to delivering educational seminars and conferences nationally for mental health professionals, educators, and parents. After retirement, Elie continued to spend his time and energy volunteering to promote the town of Pittsfield and foster local arts and music, as well as support local Jewish education.

One of Elie's many passions was supporting local arts and cultural events in the Berkshires. His efforts to promote a rich and vibrant creative scene were realized through his volunteering with the Pittsfield Downtown Cultural Center. In 2016, Elie conceptualized and later founded Berkshire Lightscapes. His idea was realized with the installation of permanent, artistic lighting that continue to bring life and light to the downtown Pittsfield area. His partners in the project, Steve Oakes and Peter Lafayette, are continuing his legacy. In 2018, the town of Pittsfield awarded Elie with the Robert K. Quattrochi "Downtown Person of the Year."

Elie's love of music was in no way limited to any one genre. Whether there was jazz, classical, Motown, reggae, or funk on the radio, Elie could always find the beat. He put this passion into action for the community's benefit, serving as the chair of the board of MusicWorks, which brought Boston Symphony Orchestra artists to the Berkshires to perform in the off-season.

Elie also served as the chairman of the board of Sinai Academy, a Jewish day school in Pittsfield. In 2009, Elie was awarded the Hannah Senesh Award to recognize his passion for Jewish education and volunteer leadership. From 2012-2016, Elie chaired the board of "Rimon: Resource Center for Jewish Spirituality" led by Rabba Kaya Stern-Kaufman offering progressive programs serving unaffiliated Jews and non-Jews.

Elie is survived by Myrna, his beloved spouse and best friend; their son, Eric Hammerling (wife Andrea) and daughter, Jaimie Hammerling Bern (husband Rick). Eric's son Mateo (20), and Jaimie's sons Zachary (12) and Ari (9) were all fortunate to enjoy

many years of unbridled love and joy with their grandfather, whom they called "Saba." Elie is also survived by his sister and brother-in-law, Joyce and Steve Laitman, their sons, Michael and Jim Laitman, and his sister-in-law Lynda Galler.

The family would like to express appreciation to the dedicated support and care at BMC Cancer Center and Berkshire HospiceCare. Donations can be sent to the "Hammerling Fund" at Kneset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield MA 01201, or to your favorite cause. A graveside service took place on Monday afternoon, July 20. An announcement will be made about a gathering to celebrate Elie's life with his family and community during a safer time.

### Michael Allen Kuvent, 69, many commendations for advocacy for people with disabilities

PITTSFIELD – Michael Allen Kuvent, 69, passed away Monday, July 13 at Berkshire Medical Center.

Born in Portland, ME on April 22, 1951, he was the son of the late Abraham Kuvent and Sarah Apkin.

Michael was educated in North Adams public schools and the Saint Colletta school in Hanover, MA. He worked as an assembler for Blue Q for 19 years. Upon his retirement in 2010, Mayor Roberto proclaimed it "Michael Kuvent Day" in Pittsfield. Over the years, Michael received many commendations for his advocacy for people with disabilities. He was also an avid baseball fan.

He was married to the former Grace E. Chilton. She predeceased him on October 8, 2017.

Mr. Kuvent leaves behind three brothers; George Apkin (Nancy) of Williamstown, William Apkin (Jane) of Lanesborough, and Joseph Apkin (Anne) of Cheshire; sister, Judith Apkin and her partner Cathy Surack of Nashua, NH; and eight nieces and nephews.

Graveside services were held Friday, July 17 in the Pinegrove Section of Pittsfield Cemetery, officiated by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat. Memorial contributions may be made in his name to BCARC in care of Dery Funeral Home, 54 Bradford Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

### Edward Henry Kohn, 90, passion developing conservation and land saving strategies

PLAINFIELD, MA – Edward Henry Kohn, loving husband and father, died peacefully at home on Thursday, July 23.

Born February 16, 1930 in Chicago, son of the late

Herbert Samuel Kohn, Mildred Nadel Kohn Schwartz, and stepmother Ida Rothenberg Kohn, Edward graduated from South Shore High School in Chicago in 1948. Although Edward was a city boy, he was a long time Boy Scout and wilderness explorer.

Throughout his life he took every opportunity to be in nature, often on solo trips when he was a young man and then with his three girls. There were many adventures from canoeing solo in the boundary waters to hiking and camping in the Appalachians and the Northwest Pacific coast.

Edward joined the Marines in 1951, where he incurred an injury just before deployment to Korea. In 1952, he was one of the Marines who took part in the atomic bomb testing at Desert Rock in Nevada. In his own words: "Pre-dawn in 1952 at Desert Rock in an atomic bomb blast maneuver from a deep black trench: First white wash. Even your boots disappeared. Then a slow count, to 10, turning and right there a manmade sun swarming with every color brilliant rising on its turbulent stalk into a dawning sky. 'Breathtaking' is understatement." In 1953, Sergeant Edward Henry Kohn was honorably discharged from the US Marine Corps.

The GI Bill made it possible for him to get his bachelor of science in Social Psychology, Phi Beta Kappa, from University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1955. He then studied toward a doctorate in Anthropology with Knapp fellowships at University Wisconsin and Harvard from 1955 to 1957. From 1960 to 1963, Edward was the coordinator for Project Moonwatch, part of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, MA. He always made sure to look up at the night sky and encouraged those around him to do the same. In 1960, he met Ann Catherine MacDonald at an Adlai Stevenson for President campaign meeting. They married two years later.

From 1963 to 1978, Edward continued his career with the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, where he held the positions of executive officer of the Science Information Exchange, director of Programming and Budget, and helped to acquire land on the Mall for future museums, including the Hirschhorn and American Indian Museum. As deputy director of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama, he helped ensure the continuation of this important research and education institute. Edward's final position with the Smithsonian was as deputy director of the National

Zoo in Washington, where he helped to acquire land for the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute at Front Royal. He moved with his family to Minneapolis, MN where he was the general director of the Minnesota Zoological Garden from 1979 to 1982.

In 1983, Edward, Ann, and Rachel moved to Plainfield where, as he said, "I was recruited by the land. That is my service now." He spent the last 37 years dedicated to bringing people and land together – in service to both. From 1987 to 1988, he was executive director of the Hilltown Community Development Corp where he helped to develop the Housing Rehab Program.

Edward's passion was developing town and regional conservation action and land saving strategies. He wrote and philosophized on land ethos. One of his proudest accomplishments was helping the Massachusetts Audubon Society acquire a 1500-acre piece of highland and wetland land in Plainfield for nature conservation. He also helped to set up agricultural preservation with the Central Street Compact, securing a corridor of open field, meadows, and farmland in Plainfield, the town he fell in love with on a chance drive with his girls 38 years ago. He was committed to sharing his idea of our connectedness to each other and the planet which he expressed with his final thesis: "Planetus We Are One."

Edward is survived by his wife of 57 years, Ann MacDonald Kohn; daughters Lisa Margaret Kohn (husband Warner Simon Simonides) and Rachel Stephanie Kohn (husband Donald Joseph Bakerian). He was predeceased by his sister Joan Kohn Schiffer.

The family would like to express their deepest gratitude to all the wonderful caregivers and for support they received from Hospice Care in The Berkshires. Please donate to either The Massachusetts Audubon Society, (<https://www.massaudubon.org/get-involved/ways-to-give>) or The Plainfield Fire-EM, 304 Main Street, Plainfield, MA 01070.

### Sharon Rawlings Kramer, compassion, intelligence, and fierce devotion to her patients

PITTSFIELD – Sharon Rawlings Kramer, MD, died on Tuesday, July 7 after a battle with cancer that began this spring.

Dr. Rawlings was born in Dallas, TX and moved with her family to the Boston area

OBITUARIES, continued on next page

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**ONGOING MINYANS**

Sunday 8:45 a.m. and 7 p.m.  
Tuesday 7 p.m.  
Friday 7 a.m. and 5:45 p.m.  
Saturday 9:30 a.m.  
and evenings approximately  
30 minutes before sunset

**CANDLE-LIGHTING**

*Holiday candle lighting times  
and Havdalah are on page 8.*

Friday, Sept 11 ..... 6:50 p.m.  
Friday, Sept 18 ..... 6:38 p.m.  
Friday, Sept 25 ..... 6:25 p.m.  
Friday, Oct 2 ..... 6:13 p.m.  
Friday, Oct 9 ..... 6:01 p.m.



# Connecting with Community

## Nourish Your Body, Mind, and Soul!

**In response to coronavirus guidelines...**

As of press time, all in-person Connecting With Community programming has been canceled. For the most up-to-date information and details on virtual programming, please visit our website [www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org) to sign up for our eblasts to receive a weekly listing of online opportunities.

**Meals-on-Wheels & Meals to Go – Advance Reservation Required**

Kosher lunch will be prepared on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. *Meals to go will be ready by noon for pickup at the Kneset Israel kitchen door, 16 Colt Road in Pittsfield.*

All meals-on-wheels will be delivered by Federation volunteers in the early afternoon.

**Please call (413) 442-2200 no later than 9 a.m. to reserve your meal for pickup and to arrange delivery if standing instructions are not in place.** All are welcome to reserve meals for pick-up, although delivery may be limited in certain circumstances.

The menus listed below are planned, but may be modified depending on availability of ingredients. When making a reservation, please inform us if a person in your party has a food allergy.

Adults 60 and over: \$2 suggested donation. Adults under 60: \$7 per person.

**Volunteers are Vital!** Volunteer drivers who can deliver meals-on-wheels are always appreciated. Please call Susan Frisch Lehrer at (413) 442-4360, ext. 14. The Federation's kosher hot lunch program is offered in collaboration with Elder Services of Berkshire County.



**Jewish Federation**  
OF THE BERKSHIRES

**OBITUARIES, continued**  
*from previous page*

as a child. She graduated from Stoughton High School in 1989 and from Brandeis University in 1993. She attended the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, and completed her medical residency at Brown University.

Dr. Rawlings moved to Berkshire County in 1999, initially working for Berkshire Medical Group, and later for Berkshire Health Systems. In that capacity, she was a doctor and healer to many thousands of people, earning a reputation for compassion, intelligence, and a fierce devotion to her patients.

Besides being a physician, and a loving wife and mother, Sharon also had a fondness for international travel and for genre fiction like Doctor Who.

Dr. Rawlings is survived by her husband, Dr. Eric Kramer, and son Noah of Pittsfield; mother, Lynn Rawlings of Stoughton; and sister, Elaine McManus of Strafford, NH.

Donations may be made to Temple Anshe Amunim, 26 Broad Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201 (<https://www.ansheamunim.org/>) or Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201 (<https://www.jewishberkshires.org/>). There is no public service planned at this time.

**Paul Robert Aronson, 93,  
board member of Jewish organizations**

STOCKBRIDGE – Paul Robert Aronson, 93, died Thursday, August 13. The son of Nathan and Gertrude Aronson, of blessed memory, Paul was raised in Swampscott, MA, where his grandparents were among the first Jewish residents of that seaside town.

At 15, Paul was one of the youngest graduates of Swampscott High School. He received a B.A. from Bowdoin College in 1948, and served in the US Coast Guard Merchant Marines. Paul and his late wife, Lenore (Leni), raised their four children in Swampscott until 1972, when they moved to Chestnut Hill. Paul and Leni summered in Stockbridge, where they graciously hosted family and friends for more than three decades, and centered their lives around Tanglewood, The Berkshire International Film Festival,

and the theatre community. Paul and Leni retired to Loomis Village in South Hadley where Paul remained after Leni's death in 2017.

An avid tennis player and skier, Paul skied slopes and trails from New England to Europe. He and Leni loved international travel, theater, music and art, a love they shared with their children and grandchildren.

Paul's work life began at Goldberg's Furniture Company, his family's furniture business in Lynn, MA, where he honed sales and financial skills, later becoming an investment advisor, from which he retired at age 83.

Paul served on the board

of the American Jewish Committee, representing the AJC as an American Ambassador to their groundbreaking Berlin, Germany conference. He also served as a board member at Temple Israel of Boston.

For the last 10 years, Paul enjoyed his expanding family, playing bridge, and reading. A history and politics buff, Paul happily conversed on world-wide events.

Paul is survived by his children: Lisa Newmann (Sandy Sanderson) of Stockbridge; Steffi Aronson Karp (Eric H. Karp) of Waban, MA; Michael Aronson (Rebecca Aronson) of Amherst; and Nancy Aronson of Arlington, MA.

Grandchildren are Joshua, Dan, and Adam Karp (Rachel Bond), Jeremy, Allegra, and Sage Aronson. Jeff (Lauren), and Jill Sanderson. Great-grandchildren are Henry, Leah, and Reid Sanderson. Paul also leaves his sister, Dorothy Kardon (Donald Kardon) of Philadelphia, as well as his companion, Maud Fischer, who shared with Paul a love for bridge, books, film, and history.

Paul proudly sported an anti-Trump pin on his clothing since November 2016, and will continue to wear that pin on his shroud into eternity. On the evening before he died, Paul R. Aronson gave one of his last smiles at the

news that Joe Biden named Kamala Harris as his running mate. Donations may be made in Paul's memory to a 2020 campaign or organization that helps unseat the current administration.

A private graveside service was held on Sunday, August 16 at Stockbridge Cemetery followed by Zoom *shiva*.

## What's for Lunch?

# Dairy Free, \*\* Gluten Free Main Entrée

For more information on specific programs please see "Your Federation Presents" section of this paper.

**SEPTEMBER**

**Monday, 7** ..... Closed for Labor Day

**Tuesday, 8** ..... Bean and cheese enchilada casserole\*\*, yellow rice, salad, Mexican corn, white bread, churros, and tea.

**Thursday, 10** ..... Fresh fish\*\*, juice of chef's choice, noodle kugel, broccoli, salad, oat bread, mandarin oranges, and tea.

**Monday, 14** ..... Asian flavored turkey tenders\*\*#, miso soup, rice, Oriental blend vegetables, breads TBA, chocolate chip cookies (parve), and tea.

**Tuesday, 15** ..... Sloppy Joes\*\*#, corn, green beans, hamburger buns, chocolate chip cookies (parve), and tea.

**Thursday, 17** ..... Roasted chicken\*\*#, noodle soup, asparagus cuts n tips, salad, oven roasted potatoes, Challah, apple dumplings, and tea.

**Monday, 21** ..... Veal stew\*\*#, salad, noodles, mixed vegetables, pumpernickel bread, grapes, and tea.

**Tuesday, 22** ..... Spaghetti & meat sauce#, Italian blend

vegetables, salad, Italian bread, applesauce, and tea.

**Thursday, 24** ..... Salmon\*\*#, salad, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, farmer's loaf, peaches, and tea.

**Monday, 28** ..... Closed for Yom Kippur

**Tuesday, 29** ..... Cheese ravioli casserole with mushrooms, broccoli, salad, garlic bread, fruit cocktail, and tea.

**OCTOBER**

**Thursday, 1** ..... Black bean burgers with cheese, juice of chef's choice, corn medley, brown rice, hamburger buns, cookies, and tea.

**Monday, 5** ..... Chicken patties#, sweet potato fries, mixed vegetables, salad, rye bread, tropical fruit salad, and tea.

**Tuesday, 6** ..... Meal to be announced

**Thursday, 8** ..... Chef's choice of vegetable frittata\*\*, mushroom soup, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, farmer's loaf, pears, and tea.

**Monday, 12** ..... Closed for Columbus Day

### Homebound or recovering from an illness or injury?

Let us help you arrange for a kosher lunch to be delivered through our Kosher Meals on Wheels Program. Call (413) 442-4360, ext 10



Donate  
Volunteer  
Make a Difference

## BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

### Traveling with Jewish Taste

#### Lost? and Found: The Jews of Nigeria

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



"But Ma, he's Jewish!" That was the very catchy title of a program hosted by my Hadassah chapter in San Francisco. Unfortunately, I got stuck in traffic on the Oakland Bay Bridge and never got to hear the talk, but the idea that there were Jews other than the ones I had grown up with — white and mostly Ashkenazi — fascinated me.

Among the joys of travel is the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty, cultural life, and unique foodways of these places. And when Joel and I travel, we always look for Jewish sites.

But meeting new people in their home countries is the thing that can bring a trip over the top.

Now, just because we're not going further than the corner store these days, it doesn't mean we can't continue the global staycation that we started last month. This time, we'll continue our exploration of Jewish life in Africa.

After the Assyrian conquest of Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the victors carried away many captives. But the rest of the ten tribes in the Northern Kingdom dispersed to "the four corners of the earth," never to be heard from again. Never? Over the millennia, numerous theories have circulated as to the fate of these Ten Lost Tribes, and at least a dozen communities around the world claim descendance from these ancient Israelites. Whether the Assyrian Jews of Kurdistan, the B'nai Menashe in India, the Beta Israel of Ethiopia or the Kaifeng Jews of China, these groups may indeed be members of the lost tribes. And, why not?

After the Assyrian rout of Israel, one of the directions the refugees headed was southwest. Before there were nation states on the African continent, there were tribes, and it was into several of those tribes, in what is now Nigeria, that some exiled Jews assimilated, marrying and having children. The Yoruba Jews, numbering around 2,000, call themselves B'nai Ephraim (children of Ephraim), as they believe they are descended from the tribe of that name. And the Annang, Efik, and Ibibio peoples also have ancient religious practices similar to those in the Torah.

The largest group of Nigerian Jews is made up of members of the Igbo (pronounced ee-bo) tribe. While missionaries converted most of the Igbo tribe to Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a small minority became Muslim in the 20<sup>th</sup>, the proud Igbo Jews never forgot their origins. The intriguing documentary, *Re-Emerging: The Jews of Nigeria*, follows the Jews of the Igbo tribe and their dedication to the faith of their ancestors. In the course of the film, a couple of the Igbo Jews recall their parents telling them that they were descended from the Hebrews of long ago.

Support for their belief came from an unusual source. One Olaudah Equiano was an 18<sup>th</sup> century Igbo who had been captured and sold as a slave in the Caribbean. He ultimately won his freedom and settled in London, and in 1789, Equiano published his autobiography, in which he cited evidence that his tribe was descended from the Jews of Israel. He wrote:

The strong analogy which ... appears to prevail in the manners and customs of my countrymen and those of the Jews, before they reached the Land of Promise, and particularly the patriarchs while they were yet in that pastoral state which is described in Genesis – an analogy, which alone would induce me to think that the one people had sprung from the other.

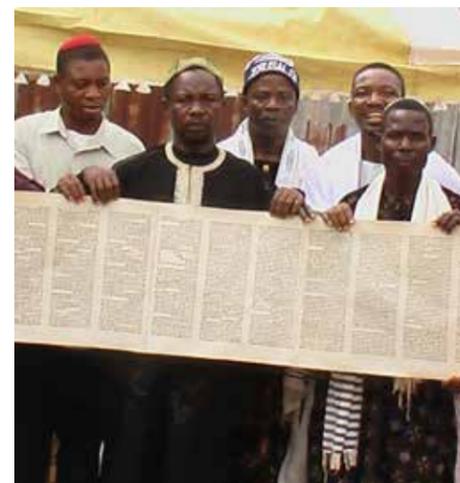


And yes, there is a Chabad House in Nigeria – Rabbi Yisroel and Chaya Uzan operate the Chabad Jewish Community Center of Nigeria located in Abuja, which has the largest Jewish presence in Nigeria, but also provides for the spiritual welfare of the smaller Jewish communities of Lagos, Ibadan, Benin City, Kashimbila. Chabad of Nigeria has a preschool Little Gems, a mikvah, and a small kosher supermarket. They also started ChabadAid, a humanitarian program.

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She is currently at work on a food history/cookbook, tracing the paths that some of our favorite foods have taken from their origins to appear on dinner plates and in cultural rites and artifacts around the world. She invites readers to read her blog at [carolgoodmankaufman.com](http://carolgoodmankaufman.com) and to follow her on Twitter @goodmankaufman.



Photos of Igbo Jews from *Re-Emerging: The Jews of Nigeria*, a 2014 documentary film.



Given that the Igbo Jews arrived in Africa centuries before the Talmud was compiled, they neither knew about nor followed rabbinic law. But their religious practices include circumcision on the eighth day after the birth of a boy, observance of *kashrut* and *niddah*, wearing of tallit and kippah, and celebration of holidays like Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. Coincidence?

While some Igbos have made *aliyah* to Israel, a strong and growing community remains in Nigeria, served by an eye-popping 26 synagogues, with population estimates ranging widely, from 3,000 to 30,000 Jews. And every year more Igbos convert to Judaism.

"To the four corners of the earth," indeed. So much of Jewish history involves conquest and exile, but those many exiles have produced an amazingly diverse international family tree.

#### Suya (Grilled Kebab with Spicy Peanut Rub)

Suya, made with a dry peanut-based rub, may be the quintessential Nigerian street food. And when they say "spicy," they mean it. While some really do like it hot, I have *significantly* reduced the amount of cayenne pepper from the original recipe. Add more if you're brave.



#### Ingredients:

2 lb steak or London broil	¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 cup dry roasted peanuts	(more if you really like heat)
1½ teaspoon smoked paprika	vegetable oil
1 tablespoon garlic powder	6 skewers (soaked in water for
1 tablespoon onion powder	30 minutes if you are using
1 tablespoon white pepper	wooden)
1 teaspoon salt	

#### Instructions:

- Heat the oven to 450°F. Lightly spray or oil baking sheet or roasting pan.
- In a medium bowl, mix the salt and spices together. Set aside
- Pulse the peanuts in a blender, food processor or coffee grinder until finely crushed — not to a paste!
- Add the ground peanuts to the spice mixture.
- Pat the meat dry with a paper towel.
- Slice the meat, against the grain, into thin strips.
- Drizzle oil over meat and toss to coat.
- Add the meat to the spice mixture, coating completely.
- Thread the skewers, dividing the meat evenly among them.
- Line a roasting pan or baking sheet with foil, coat with vegetable spray, and place the skewers on it.
- Roast for about 12-15 minutes.
- Serve warm with a salad.

**BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES**

**“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers (and sisters)”**

By Barry R. Shapiro

It all started innocently enough, as great adventures sometimes do.

“Ever wonder what it’s like to be an actor?” read the teaser in the Congregation Ahavath Sholom newsletter. If so, it continued, join us on Sunday, April 7, 2019 when actor, director, playwright and Temple member, Linda Josephs, will peel back the curtain, so to speak.

Why not, thought I? I’ve always been interested in acting but have never done any since my role in “Convenient Modern Times,” a student written play at PS 233 in Brooklyn when I was in the sixth grade.

So, I joined about a dozen other intrepid souls that sunny day to sit with Linda Josephs and take some tentative, awkward, very self-conscious steps into the world of the “actor.”

Over the ensuing year and a half, our group of twelve slowly whittled itself down to three: Ellen Axelrod, Barbara Janoff, and me. Understandably, some people found the classes simply not for them. Others said they found it too challenging. Some simply didn’t have the time.

And what have we three survivors accomplished during that time?

Well, so much more than we could have ever anticipated.

We met at least once and sometimes twice a week in the pre-COVID world and by Zoom after. We learned how fiendishly hard the craft of acting is. We tested and stretched our ability to memorize our lines. We learned how to create and develop a character, both physically and emotionally. We

struggled with and overcame our inhibitions and fears. We took ourselves places we had not been before and places where, sometimes, we really didn’t want to go. We learned how to let our movements and how we speak develop organically. We took joy in watching our work develop and, without exaggeration, perhaps even more joy in watching the growth of our fellow actors with whom we now enjoy a personal and special bond. We played such diverse roles as Shylock, a Catholic priest, a schoolteacher/astronaut and even a desperate woman holding on to a phone booth in New Mexico. We learned to listen to and learn from each other. We also learned how to listen to and learn from Linda’s seemingly constant prodding and criticism without being defensive (at least most of the time). And we really laughed a lot and, despite all the hard work, had so much fun it was almost illegal.

A word about our remarkable director and friend, Linda.

We are unanimous that what has made all of this hard work so worthwhile and, candidly, transformative, has been Linda’s treatment of us as professionals and her tireless efforts to help us develop our skills as fledgling actors. Words like “relentless,” “demanding,” “uncompromising,” and “creative,” seem to fit. The more she has asked, the more we have wanted to give. The more she has said, “Good. Good. Now try it this way,” the more we have smiled, taken a deep breath, and tried to deliver our lines in the seemingly endless variations she has devised. Linda has worked so hard, with such

constant good humor, and her expectations of us are so high, that none of us wants to let her down or fail to put everything we have into our work. I know that all of us are beyond grateful to her for her dedication and confidence in us. It is no wonder that our classes are consistently among the best hours of our week.

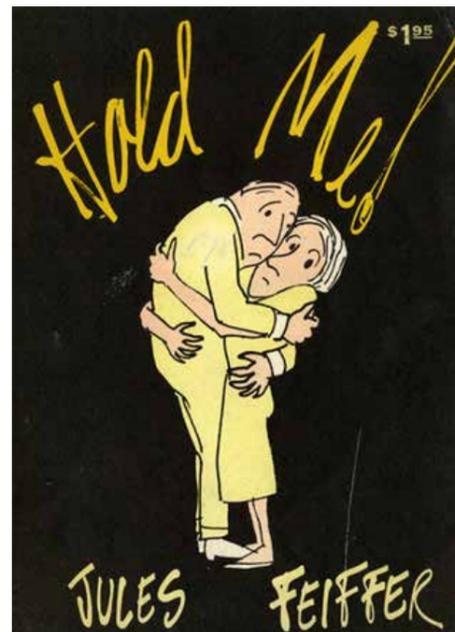
So, why not join us as we make our virtual “stage” debut on September 6 at 2 p.m.?

We hope that you’ll be impressed by what you see and the quite diverse roles we’ve developed over the past year and a half.

And maybe, when we start our next class sometime in the fall (we hope), you’ll be tempted to join our intrepid band of brothers and sisters. We promise to welcome you with open arms (socially

distant, of course, if still necessary).

Congregation Ahavath Sholom and The CAS Theatre Group will stage vignettes from “Hold Me,” by Jules Feiffer and monologues from “Zara Spook and Other Lures,” by Joan Ackermann, “Defying Gravity,” by Jane Anderson, “The Merchant of Venice,” by William Shakespeare, and “Doubt,” by John Patrick Shanley. Tune in on the CAS website ([www.ahavathsholom.org](http://www.ahavathsholom.org)) Sunday, September 6 at 2 p.m.



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## BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

MICROFINANCE, *continued from page 1*

financing. Some 200 million people globally now receive support from microfinance institutions, with most of the recipients in the developing world. In the beginning, much of the microfinance industry was managed by non-governmental organizations, but today the majority of these institutions are commercial and regulated by governments, and they provide safe places for the poor to save, as well as offering much-needed capital and other financial services.”

In their program, DiLeo and Lieberman will chart the development of microfinance, explain its role in the worldwide financial market, and explore its future in a world economy changed by technology and the pressures of coping with the coronavirus pandemic.

**Paul DiLeo** is the founder of Grassroots Capital Management PBC based in Plainfield, MA, and has over three decades of experience in development finance and 20 years of experience in the microfinance sector. Paul has worked extensively in Russia, Nicaragua, India, Argentina, Bosnia, Nigeria and many other countries, and for the U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

**Ira Lieberman** worked for the World Bank from 1994 to 2003, and was founding director of the CGAP Secretariat, the de facto administrative office of the microfinance sector globally. His last book, *In Good Times Prepare for Crisis*, is a sweeping historical analysis of the reasons why nations, in good times, don't really do enough to prepare for the next crisis.

Both have homes in the Berkshires, and spoke in August with the BJV about some of the themes they'll cover in their September 24 Zoom presentation. (Please check your emails from Federation to find the necessary links, or visit our calendar of events online at [www.jewishberkshires.org](http://www.jewishberkshires.org).) The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

**Berkshire Jewish Voice: Tell us a little about the origins of microfinance.**

**Ira Lieberman:** The concept of microfinance is an old concept but the way it got started in the current era is really through Mohammad Yunus. He started funding women throughout Bangladesh through Grameen Bank and giving them small loans for self-employment opportunities. A lot of the women were on their own because the husbands were off in the Middle East and other places sending back remittances, but women still had to support their family on an ongoing basis. People [who] knew anything about microfinance at the beginning knew BRAC [International], also in Bangladesh, which is still today probably the best national NGO (non-governmental organization) operating in the world. They

knew Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI), which was assisted by the Harvard Institute of Development and became famous for mobilizing savings from the poor throughout Indonesia. We have found that the poor need working capital loans to support their businesses, but they also need a safe place to save. Today, microfinance is all over the developing world and everywhere in the transition world – meaning the former socialist countries, particularly in the poorer ones in Central Asia. It's very big in China, and that's been driven by technology to a great degree, and it's rising very strongly in India hopefully not damaged too badly by the current crisis.

**BJV: As I read your description, it seems as if microfinance institutions as originally construed operated more like NGOs and could not operate without subsidy. Has that changed?**

**Lieberman:** Almost all the microfinance institutions were NGOs when I started running CGAP and then over about a 10-year period from 1995 to 2005, many of the larger institutions converted to become commercial banks operating as microfinance banks for small, but not medium-sized business. Much of their lending was group lending, where you had a group of five to ten people and each member of the group guaranteed the other members of the group – so if I was sick and I couldn't pay, other members of the group backstopped me and paid my loans. That's how Grameen started and [its method] spread over the world.

Now the bigger institutions primarily lend on an individual basis. Group lending constrains the more successful of the borrowers and so it limits their ability to borrow. Many of the NGOs converted to banks. But you have a wide array today of institutions: you have NGOs, you have cooperatives (mainly in West Africa), you have commercial banks and you have credit unions. So there are a wide number of institutional sources, but the commercial banks who also mobilize savings are the dominant institutions in terms of loan volume and assets held.

Most of the microfinance institutions started that way and even if they converted to banks, they mostly do small business lending. But they also have provided diversified products like housing rehabilitation and education loans. They hooked up with insurance carriers to do micro-insurance – that was very big in Africa when AIDS was so prevalent. Insurance was financing funerals or used against people's deaths if they had loans. My hope, my expectations were that the diversity of products would grow significantly. They haven't become that significant as a percentage of the portfolio, but they become meaningful in the sense that it gives people some other financial products to draw upon when necessary.

[Lieberman explained

how, in the past decade, microfinance institutions (MFI) have been less highly subsidized and expected to sustain their operations through the businesses and investments they are engaged in. The donor world has moved toward a broader concept called financial inclusion, which is geared toward helping the poor use diversified financial products. He has written that a primary utility of microfinance is preventing the poor from moving into deeper poverty, rather than it being a way of eliminating poverty, a promise that he says was “oversold” by early proponents like Muhammad Yunus. When asked what he believes is the lasting benefit of financial inclusion, he answered:]

My experience in visiting microfinance institutions throughout the world, particularly villages in Mexico, was that mothers would always tell you “at least the kids are being educated.” And so I took it as a next-generation issue – meaning the people who are borrowing and building and small businesses today are not the ones coming out of poverty, but they're not going into deep poverty. It's the next generation being educated on the back of microfinance loans and savings that are going to come out just like our parents and grandparents if they immigrated from Eastern Europe. This is my own view which is not necessarily widely espoused but I think we're going to see subsequent generations coming up and benefiting greatly.

**Paul DiLeo:** There is a fair amount of recent research that seems to show that if you take the average of all the microfinance clients the impact on poverty and wealth accumulation is quite modest. But certain groups seem to benefit quite a bit, so when you start segregating, you find that in fact, the average is masking very disparate experiences. A lot of the attention now is focused on trying to figure out how to best target microfinance – it clearly has benefits in terms of cash management

pretty much for everybody, and it's one more instrument that poor people can use in managing what turns out to be very complex financial lives; and so that benefit seems to apply to everybody. But in terms of poverty reduction and wealth accumulation, the benefits there seem to be concentrated among certain clients and so a lot of the work now is focused on targeting the financial products offered by microfinance institutions to those clients who would benefit.

**BJV: How do politics figure into the microfinance world and what kinds of political pressure may be applied to people making decisions within the industry?**

**DiLeo:** There were some very dramatic episodes, like in Nicaragua or in the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, where microfinance started to be used as a political issue. And you can imagine that for a politician trying to generate headlines or trying to capture a superficial mantle of populist good will saying that they are going to forgive all debts or cap interest rates, that can make for a nice headline.

I suppose that's always sort of a background threat, that a politician will pick up on that and try to run with it; and the consequences can be very damaging. But I think on a more sort of universal level, the interplay of politics has followed the trajectory of microfinance from a fairly small scale, mostly nonprofit activity that really fell below the radar. Nobody really took it very seriously.

When it really started to gain scale and demonstrate that it could be done on a profitable self-sustaining basis, around the world politicians and regulators have recognized that microfinance is an important part of the financial systems in most countries. In some countries it's a very important part – in Bolivia, the largest bank is in microfinance. Even where portfolios relative to the total assets of the financial system are small, in terms of clients it is very important. So I think it sort of gained a certain measure of respect and appreciation and

## The Future of Microfinance



IRA W. LIEBERMAN,  
PAUL DI LEO, TODD A. WATKINS,  
AND ANNA KANZE, EDITORS

is treated as one more institutional feature of the financial system, which I think is generally positive.

**Lieberman:** By the way, there have been very few crises in microfinance. They've been relatively small scale. They haven't been universal. They've been institution-particular. There have been some national crises but you haven't had a universal banking crisis in microfinance and the loss rate until this current crisis has generally been under one percent. That's an incredible achievement.

**BJV: What do advances in technology – for example, smartphones giving people the power to access information and to connect globally – hold for microfinance?**

**DiLeo:** Multiple factors are at play pretty much universally. As they are able, microfinance institutions are trying to incorporate digital technologies into their operations. That could be simply eliminating the paper of loan applications, or having field officers outfitted with handheld devices that allow them to enter information that goes directly into the loan accounting system to incorporate mobile payments so borrowers don't have to actually physically hand over cash. At the far end of the spectrum you have fintech (financial technology companies) that have no loan officers at all, that are fully algorithmic doing

MICROFINANCE, *continued on next page*

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# BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

## MICROFINANCE, *continued from previous page*

everything with machines and artificial intelligence.

But there is a challenge in terms of the culture of microfinance institutions. A few of the institutions that have tried to move very quickly and aggressively towards incorporating these various digital tools into their processes have found that it poses a real challenge to the culture of the institution. You're going from reliance on loan officers and their knowledge of the communities where they operate to a more centralized machine-driven process, and this can be a very difficult transition to manage. It also, in many cases, requires parallel systems. You have that whole traditional system [of personal contact through loan officers and "brick and mortar" offices] and then, in parallel, they're building a digital system. So in many cases, instead of efficiencies being gained, you might actually see costs go up.

Many institutions are struggling to find the balance between [technology] what's referred to as sort of the "high touch" traditional approach of microfinance, where you really are trying to build a loan officer/client relationship that is believed to be an important factor in ensuring those low default rates.

I was on a call not that long ago with the CEOs of some very large Indian microfinance institutions, and

I was surprised at how vigorously they argued that the essential value of their institutions lay in the human relationships with the clients. They felt without exception that they have to preserve that if their institutions were to have any future. The last factor I would mention is that digital technologies affect different types of clients. Young urban clients tend to take to digital technologies very quickly and to appreciate the convenience and take full advantage, whereas at the other end of the spectrum, older rural women can be excluded if these technologies supplant the more traditional channels of relationship.

*The Future of Microfinance* (Edited by Ira W. Lieberman, Paul DiLeo, Todd A. Watkins, and Anna Kanze) is available through the Brookings Institution website at [www.brookings.edu/book/the-future-of-microfinance/](http://www.brookings.edu/book/the-future-of-microfinance/). The book is based on the results of a workshop at Lehigh University among thirty-four leaders in the industry. The editors, working with contributions from more than a dozen leading authorities in the field, tell the important story of how microfinance developed, how it has met the needs of hundreds of millions of people, and they address key questions about how it can continue to meet those needs in the future.

# MAZEL TOV

## Mazel Tov to...

- Ilse Browner** on her 95th birthday \*
- Jared Senzel** on his bar mitzvah \*
- Alan Cohen** on his 80th birthday \*
- Arlene Schiff**, national director of the LIFE & LEGACY program for The Harold Grinspoon Foundation, on the program's milestone of achieving more than \$1 billion in legacy commitments (see related story on page 10) \*
- Ellen Masters** on her 75th birthday \*
- Barbara and Gerald Hayden** on their 60th wedding anniversary \*
- Loretta and Joel Prives** on the birth of their granddaughter, **Annabell James** \*
- Marcie and Richie Simons** on the birth of their grandson, **Amital Dov** \*
- Charlie Raser** on his bar mitzvah at Knesset Israel \*
- Matt Tannenbaum**, who raised \$100,000+ in a GoFundMe drive to save The Bookstore in Lenox \*
- Josh Landes**, WAMC's Berkshire bureau chief, not only on being awarded first place in "spot announcing" by The New York State Associated Press Association, but on getting engaged to **Allison Lerman-Gluck** – mazel tov too to parents **Brenda and Fred Landes** \*
- Roy and Leslie Kozupsky** on the birth of their granddaughter, **Noa Yael** \*
- Phoebe and Don Sugarman** on the birth of their grandson \*
- Parker Wright** on her bat mitzvah at Knesset Israel \*
- Sergey and Natalya Yantovsky** on the marriage of their son, **Ilya**, to **Kelsey Cruikshank** \*
- Gabe Dahari** on his bar mitzvah at Knesset Israel \*



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# CULTURE AND ARTS

## Yiddish a Dying Language? Not if Daniel Klein has Anything to Say About It

And he does – his new book, *SchmeGoogle*, offers a new Yiddish vocabulary for our challenging times

This autumn, Great Barrington's Daniel Klein is releasing his latest book, *SchmeGoogle*, which collects Yiddish neologisms he's come up with that describe social constructs, technological challenges, psychic conundrums, and personality disorders that would have been unknown to the world of our fathers.

[A "schmegoogle," by the way, is defined as: "A person so insignificant, that when you Google their name, nothing comes up."]

In August, Klein and BJV editor Albert Stern exchanged emails about the new

book that also drew on some of Klein's earlier books – which have variously used jokes to explain philosophy, philosophy to explain jokes, and philosophy and jokes to explore politics and spiritual ideas – to address this strange spasm of history we're living through.

***SchmeGoogle* (Chronicle Books) is available at bookstores and through amazon.com.**

**Berkshire Jewish Voice:** Can you share a new term from *SchmeGoogle* that might be particularly resonant given the situation in which we find ourselves during this time of pandemic, stay-at-home orders, political dysfunction, civil unrest, fake news, social media screeds, etc. etc.

**Daniel Klein:** "Polischmerz": n. The quality of having a dismal or depressing view of the national or world political situation. Which just about everybody has these days. [From the Yiddish word *schmerz*, meaning pain. Used in a sentence: 'Rachel has such a case of *polischmerz*; she just sits and watches videos of cartoon bears all day on her phone.]

**BJV:** At the *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, we've started to come up with a few Yiddish neologisms of our own about the times we are living in. My entry is, "*Maskeit*: a person who advocates for the continued wearing of masks in public not so much to control the virus, but because they're homely." Our friend Alex Rosenblum came up with "*Hock mir nisht keyn China*: Disputing the president's claim that the virus emanating from Wuhan was a Communist plot to disrupt the world order," and "*Bubbe-maskes*: An old wives' tale that covering your mouth will do any good." Anything you can add?

**DK:** I adore the new Yiddish words you and your colleague have come up with. It really could be fun to encourage your readers to add more new terms.[\*\* See next page]. I have noticed that there are many people who bring every conversation back to the pandemic, blaming every misfortune in their lives on it. I call them "*Kovid Kvetches*."

**BJV:** Does a joke come to mind that might shed some light on the particular situation we are in?

**DK:** Home from work early, Sam tiptoes upstairs to the master bedroom to surprise his wife. He opens the door and there is his friend, Moshe, in bed with his wife. Moshe, waves his hands and says, "First, what are you going to believe, me or your eyes?"

This classic gag has been applied to our Meshugana-in-Chief from Day One. It captures his uncanny rejection of empiricism.

Psychologists and amateur psychologists (that would be everybody else), love to dissect Trump's personality, coming to the early conclusion that he suffers from Narcissistic Personality Disorder. But lately these analysts have taken comfort in the fact that he is also incompetent, the result of being driven by self-defeating impulses.

*A moth goes to an ophthalmologist's office. The ophthalmologist asks him how he can be of help. And the moth says, "My life is a mess. I keep making one bad decision after another and then suffering the consequences."*

*The ophthalmologist says, "I'm so sorry, Moth. But what you need is a psychotherapist, not an ophthalmologist. Why did you come to me?"*

*And the moth says, "Because your light was on."*

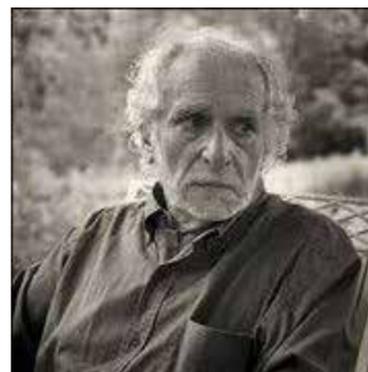
The M-in-C has been known to go to great lengths to demonstrate his very, very excellent intelligence and talents. But often his demonstrations lack a certain logic.

*Max and Izzy go to Carnegie Hall to hear the famous tenor, Lauritz Melchior.*

*Max says, "He's magnificent !"*

*Izzy shrugs and says, "If I had his voice, I'd be just as good."*

**BJV:** The subtitle of your 2015 book *Every Time I Find the Meaning of Life, They Change It* is "Wisdom of the Great Philosophers on How to Live." Which of the great philosophers might have the most to say to us about living through the particular situation we are in, and what would be his or her message?




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# BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

**DK:** The German cosmologist, George W. F. Hegel, believed that history unfolded by the dialectical forces of a World Spirit – first that of a Thesis, which is then countered by an Anti-Thesis, which is then brought together in a Synthesis that becomes the new Thesis in this ever-evolving progression. This is Big Picture stuff. These forces transcend us puny people, who don't even live very long anyhow. What do a man's good or bad intentions play in this Big Picture? *Bupkis*. So forget about taking blame (or credit) for the *mishiga'as* that's happening all around us. Schlemiels don't count, and we are all schlemiels.

The majority of modern philosophers beg to differ. They believe we have free will and hence are responsible for what happens in the world. Oy. It's enough to make a person wish he were an impotent schlemiel. With a free will, we have to get off our *tuchuses* and take responsibility for getting this virus under control, stop the emissions that our poisoning our atmosphere, risk our lives to fight against racism and fascism. All of this with only one day of rest per week and last week's *tzimmes* on the table.

The pandemic and consequently being shut in has caused many people to become increasingly self-reflective, taking stock of their lives. The most compelling words I've heard about this comes from the great philosopher, Woody Allen: "My only regret is that I wasn't somebody else."

**BJV:** Could you share a personal thought or two about the particular situation in which we find ourselves?

**DK:** What with the *pan-tsuris* of Covid-19, Global Climate Change, and the growth of racism and fascism, even the most rational and science-minded of us have the feeling that something supernatural is going on. That the gods are angry with mankind. But why, pray tell?

Personally, I have never taken the Old Testament more literally than I do recently. Like the Book of Job, where one calamity after another befalls the poor schlub, as Satan pushes Job's divine faith to the limits. Tests him. But why? What has Job done to deserve such misery?

And G-d responds, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth, Schmendrick?" (Actually, the addition of the term 'Schmendrick' only appears in my *zayde's* personal translation of the O.T.)

Actually, I kinda get the point of G-d's reply. G-d is omniscient and omnipotent. Why He does whatever He does is beyond human understanding. It just is. Man's mind is finite, but G-d's is infinite. No contest. There is no possible way we can understand G-d's ways. So a pandemic that kills millions is simply beyond us. Maybe it's a punishment, maybe it's a satanic test, but mostly it is simply beyond our understanding.

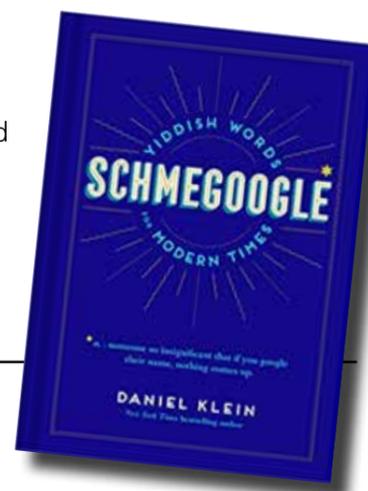


Maybe Noah's Ark gives a more comprehensible account of an angry god who is fed up with mankind's sins and follies, so decides to wipe out mankind with a momentous flood, leaving only wise old Noah, his wife and children, plus pairs of animals, to start civilization all over again. This story can be read as G-d giving man one last shot at getting it right. A fresh start, two by two, off you go. The pressure is on.

Could the ultimate outcome of COVID-19 come down to the last handful of humans stepping off the ramp with the mission to create a new, just, and cooperative world?

## \*\* It's a Contest!

We hope that Yiddishly-minded readers will take up Daniel Klein's challenge and come up with some new Yiddish terms that might describe aspects of the situation we find ourselves in the year 2020. Email your new Yiddish words or phrases to [astern@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:astern@jewishberkshires.org). The winner will be chosen by Daniel Klein and will receive a copy of *SchmeGoogle*, which, after a 14-day quarantine, will be signed by the author (who will be wearing a mask and have his hands and pen sanitized), and then be seal-wrapped and left on your doorstep by a probably COVID-free member of the BJV staff. Notable entries will appear in a future issue of the BJV.



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## BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

## A Full-Time Surgeon in Russia whose Only Job is as a Mohel

By Cnaan Liphshiz / JTA

(JTA) — The religious Jewish world has created some unusual jobs, from shofar makers to etrog pickers to *mashgichim* – kosher certifiers whose job is literally to watch others cook.

But one of the oddest surely belongs to Dr. Yeshaya Shafit, who is Russia's only *mohel*, or professional circumciser, for adult men.

Shafit, a 56-year-old surgeon, travels across that vast country to circumcise about 10 Jewish adults every week, splitting his time between Russia and the United States. Jewish ritual circumcision, called a *bris* or *brit milah*, is typically performed on 8-day-old babies, as dictated by Jewish law. Adult circumcision is common for Orthodox converts to the religion and others who become more religious later in life.

In Russia, the adult demand is very high because many Jewish men were denied the procedure during the time of the communist Soviet Union, when Jewish religious practice was effectively outlawed. Throughout the country, circumcision was not allowed unless it was required by a medical condition.

Russia's chief rabbi, Berel Lazar, a Chabad-Lubavitch leader who grew up in Italy and settled in Russia in 1987, remembers a time in his new land when performing a *bris* required being part of an illegal conspiracy.

"There was a clandestine underground. You'd show up at a designated time, get picked up in a car, blindfolded and taken to an apartment in Moscow where the *mohel* would wait," said Lazar, who helped facilitate many of these procedures.

The blindfold was to prevent men who were circumcised from later divulging, willingly or otherwise, the location and identity of those who helped circumcise them, the rabbi explained.

The conditions "were not great for surgeries," Lazar said, "yet dozens of people asked to be circumcised."

Fortunately, "nothing bad happened during those clandestine *britot*," he added. But as soon as the Soviet Union fell, "it was clear that we needed to improve conditions, and that included hiring an experienced, talented and motivated surgeon for this position."

The procedure is much more complicated for adults, requiring a skilled surgeon who is qualified to administer anesthesia and perform medical interventions if complications arise. *Mohels* who perform infant circumcisions are often not doctors.

So Lazar hired Shafit, a Russia native who moved to Israel in the 1980s, in 1990. Shafit spent time as a hand surgeon at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, but returned to Russia to work under Lazar and as a representative of the Brit Yosef Yitzchak charity, an international organization affiliated with Chabad. Founded in 1989, the group facilitates free circumcisions for Jews around the world.

Before the fall of the Berlin wall, Shafit would perform the circumcisions during his vacations. It's a tough job involving much travel and time away from his wife and two children living in Philadelphia, he said. (His family had moved there about a decade ago in connection with the higher education of his children.)

Now Lazar's Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, a nonprofit that is the main organization in that country's Jewish community of about 250,000, keeps a permanent clinic for circumcision in Moscow, where most Russian Jews live.

But Russia, whose land area is nearly twice that of the United States, has many far-flung Jewish communities, including in Kaliningrad in Russia's far west and Vladivostok, opposite the Japanese shoreline.

His travel expenses are covered by Chabad emissaries who invite him over to perform operations or by Lazar's office. And Shafit sees the work as a worthy cause.

"It's like a vaccine for a person's sense of identity," he said. "Once you do it, that man will never forget who he is."

Shafit has circumcised at least 7,000 Russian men since entering his post, with some of the procedures conducted at clinics and hospitals. Rabbis in each city — typically emissaries for the Orthodox Chabad movement, the largest organized Jewish group in Russia — line up several candidates.

Other times Shafit uses more unusual settings: apartments, synagogue back rooms or even a rabbi's office.

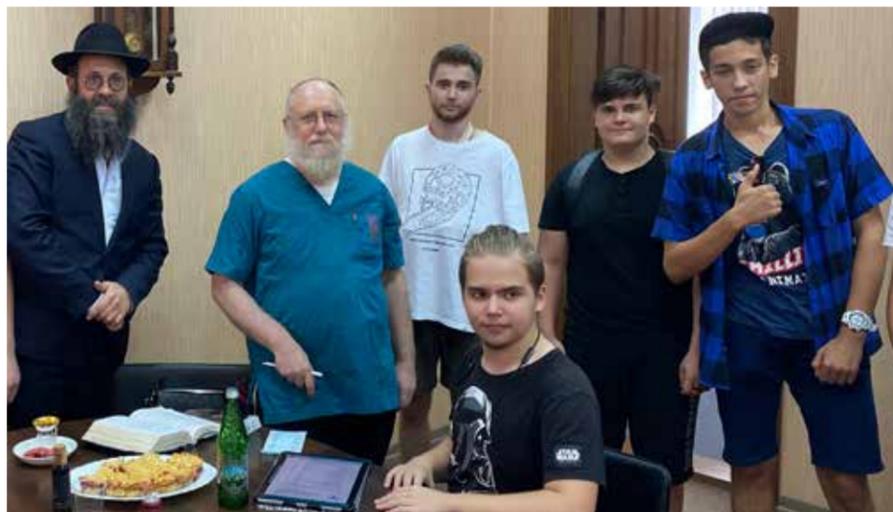
For the more remote communities without a devoted clinic, Shafit came up with a cheap and hygienic solution: foldable massage tables.

"Economic, easily stowed, designed to be cleaned to sterility. Huge improvement," said Shafit, a laconic interlocutor who during an interview showed a preference to discussing logistics over emotions or ideology. "You'll find one in the storage room of most Russian provincial synagogues today."

These arrangements were of no use during the coronavirus crisis, which hit when he was visiting his family in the U.S. He was kept out of Russia for four months due to the country's emergency measures. When he was finally allowed to reenter, Shafit had to self-isolate for two more weeks.

Meanwhile, Sergei Chernovol, a 37-year-old man who learned that he is Jewish only two years ago, was "climbing the walls" waiting for Shafit to travel to Chernovol's hometown of Rostov-on-Don in western Russia.

"I made the decision, picked the date for March 27 — and then everything was canceled indefinitely," said Chernovol, a renovations contractor who belongs to the Chabad congregation in Rostov and discovered his Jewishness after digging into the history of his maternal relatives.



Rabbi Chaim Danzinger, left, introduces Dr. Yeshaya Shafit to younger Jews awaiting circumcision at the synagogue of Rostov-on-Don, Russia on July 27, 2020. (Courtesy of the Jewish Community of Rostov, via JTA)

The waiting was "devastating," Chernovol said with tears in his eyes during a recent video interview.

His chosen date was the 100th anniversary of the death of the fifth spiritual leader of Chabad, Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, who died in Rostov. Two other members of the congregation were supposed to be circumcised at the end of an event commemorating Schneersohn's passing.

Shafit finally made it to Rostov, where he circumcised Chernovol and the two others on July 27.

To Chernovol, the sense of urgency stemmed from the Hebrew-language meaning of the term *brit milah* — its literal translation is "pact of circumcision."

"Two years after reconnecting with my Jewish identity, I had already made the pact in my mind and my soul," Chernovol said. "But to move on and live the way I'm supposed to live, I still needed to do the actual *milah*."

Getting off Shafit's operating table was "a great relief, like a weight had been lifted and an obstacle has been cleared," he added.

"[The circumcision demand] is a symbol to how Russian Jews are connected to Judaism even after decades of repression," Lazar said, "and the sacrifices they're willing to make to establish that connection."

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